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THE GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO
: ST. JOHN :
: VII-XXI :
: REV. :
T.W. GILBERT, D.D.

A DEVOTIONAL
: COMMENTARY :



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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN

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A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY

Edited by the Rev. C. H. IRWIN, D.D.

THE
GOSPEL ACCORDING
TO ST. JOHN

VII to the END

By the
Rev. T. W. GILBERT, D.D.

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Highbury

LONDON
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Jesse D. Smith 8-58

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN

I

CROSS-CURRENTS OF BELIEF AND UNBELIEF

After these things Jesus walked in Galilee : for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judæa, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For *there is* no man *that* doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him. Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come : but your time is alway ready. The world cannot hate you ; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast : I go not up yet unto this feast ; for my time is not yet full come. When he had said these words unto them, he abode *still* in Galilee.

But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he ? And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him : for some said, He is a good man : others said, Nay : but he deceiveth the people. Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ? Jesus

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answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory : but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. Did not Moses give you the law, and *yet* none of you keepeth the law ? Why go ye about to kill me ? The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil : who goeth about to kill thee ? Jesus answered, and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision ; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers ;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken ; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day ? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill ? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ ? Howbeit we know this man whence he is : but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am : and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him : for I am from him, and he hath sent me. Then they sought to take him : but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this *man* hath done ?

The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him ; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and *then* I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find *me* : and where I am, *thither* ye cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him ? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles ? What *manner* of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find *me* : and where I am, *thither* ye cannot come ? In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive : for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given* : because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Cross-Currents of Belief and Unbelief

Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him. And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.

Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) Doth our law judge *any* man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. And every man went unto his own house.—ST. JOHN VII. 1-53.

THE time had now arrived when the teaching of **St. John** our Lord was known throughout Palestine, and the **vii. 1-53.** revolutionary character of that teaching was raising **Verses 1-10.** great controversy. The greatest controversy of all, however, was roused by Christ's teaching concerning His own Person. If we take only what **St. John** records, we have enough material to show **The Person of Christ.** why Palestine was excited. The five great miracles, together with the revelations to Nicodemus and to the Samaritan woman, along with the cleansing of the Temple, and the address at Capernaum—these happenings alone would have stirred up great expectations among a people who were awaiting the fulfilment of God's promises of the Messiah.

It is this atmosphere of controversy about the Person of Christ which confronts us in chapter vii. For six months after His speech to the Jews at Capernaum our Lord had remained in Galilee owing

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John to the plots which were being hatched against Him
vii. 1-53. in Jerusalem (cf. v. 18 and vii. 19), and the record of His doings during this time is found in St. Matt. xv. to xviii. The continuance of our Lord in Galilee was something of a mystery to His half-brothers. It seemed incomprehensible to them that Christ should go on teaching the simple people of Galilee, and not rather try to persuade the Jewish leaders. Their own lack of faith in Christ made them hypercritical both about His signs and teaching. Just now, however, they thought there was an excellent opportunity for Christ to go to Jerusalem and to reveal Himself openly in the centre of the Jewish world. The Feast of Tabernacles was at hand, when for seven days the people lived in tents made of boughs, in order to recall the forty years' wandering in the desert. It was one of the three feasts which it was a matter of obligation for every male Jew to observe (Ex. xxiii. 14-17), and therefore Jerusalem would be crowded with people, some of whom would be sympathetically inclined towards Christ, as the reference to "Thy disciples" (v. 3) implies. It was a time of joyousness, and an occasion when national sentiment would be inflamed to great heights by the memories of the past. Our Lord's half-brothers therefore deemed it an excellent opportunity for Him to go and do His marvellous works in Jerusalem. The people would be keyed up with national sentiment, and they would be susceptible to the claims of One Who proclaimed Himself the Messiah, especially if those claims were accompanied by striking "works." There-

Cross-Currents of Belief and Unbelief

fore they urged our Lord to cease teaching the simple Galileans, and to make what in effect would be a Messianic entry into Jerusalem. By so doing they hinted that He would carry the capital by storm.

Our Lord's reply to His half-brothers is a plain indication that He was not going to appeal to the "marvellous" in order to gain followers, nor did He intend to make a public Messianic entry into Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles. He refused to go up to the Feast in a public way with the usual caravan crowd of pilgrims, but He went up several days later than His brethren, and He made the journey privately, and probably by a different route to that usually taken. Christ had sufficient knowledge of the minds of the rulers of the Jews to know that grave danger awaited Him if He made any public entry into Jerusalem at this stage. It was not that He feared the rulers or was apprehensive of death, but His "time was not yet full come" (v. 8) to surrender Himself to the Cross. There was much work to be done before He allowed Himself to be taken to Calvary. Therefore His coming to Jerusalem was just that of an ordinary pilgrim, "not openly, but as it were in secret" (v. 10).

If what we have stated so far reveals the unbelief of our Lord's half-brothers and the growing opposition of the Jewish leaders, it is equally clear that there were strong cross-currents of feeling amongst the Jews at Jerusalem with regard to Christ. There was a general expectation in Jerusalem that He

St. John
vii. 1-53.

Verses 11,
12.

The Jewish
people
divided.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John vii. 1-53. would come to this particular Feast, since He had evidently not been present at the Passover (cf. vi. 4). The Jewish leaders had obviously made it very plain what their feelings were with regard to Christ, since "no man spake openly of Him (at the Feast) for fear of the Jews" (v. 13). They expected Him at Jerusalem, however, since they "sought Him at the feast" (v. 11), but their inquiry is couched in contemptuous terms: "Where is that fellow?"—for such is the real meaning of the Greek words. The leading Jews had thus made clear their unfavourable attitude to our Lord, but there was considerable controversy amongst the rank and file of the people with regard to Christ. There were some who followed the line taken by the Jewish leaders and declared that "He deceiveth the people" (v. 12), but there were others who could not get away from the fact that "He is a good man" (v. 12), whatever the leaders of the Jews might say about Him.

Verses 14-17. It was in the midst of such an expectant people, who were strung up with conflicting opinions about the new Teacher, that Christ took the opportunity of teaching in the Temple during the Feast. He was at once accosted by the leading Jews with the implied jeer of reproach, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" (v. 15). They said in effect that Christ had never been taught in the schools of the Rabbis, and that He had not sat at the feet of a noted teacher, as Paul afterwards sat at the feet of Gamaliel. He had not, therefore, received the training which would entitle Him to

Cross-Currents of Belief and Unbelief

teach the Jewish Scriptures. They had the idea, **St. John** which is not uncommon even to-day, that every **vii. 1-53.** teacher and preacher must pass through some recognised training school and earn the imprimatur of some such school, or else his teaching must therefore be suspect.

Our Lord, however, reminded them that truth is attested in other ways than this. He first of all recalled to them what He had said before (cf. v. 19-31), that what He was telling men came from God Himself. But He went on to make a further statement which is of the utmost importance to every man: "If any man will do His will, **The** he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of **answer of** God, or whether I speak of Myself" (v. 17). Our **Jesus.** Lord here puts on record a truth for all time. He makes it clear that the man who reads or hears the word of God will find as he attempts to put it into practice whether it is of God or not. In the innermost recesses of his being he will receive assurance as he tries to carry out the will of God.

It is this great truth of Divine assurance follow- **Verses 18-** ing obedience to Divine direction which really **24.** showed the superficiality of the religion of the Jews. They had the will of God revealed to them in the Law and the Prophets, and had they been in the habit of trying to carry out the revealed will of God, they would have known instinctively that the teaching of Christ was also from God. But the Jews as a nation were relying on the traditions of the Rabbis for guidance, they were creating their own interpretations of many of God's ordin-

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John vii. 1-53. ances, and in this way they sought their own glory (v. 18). The process, however, dulled their spiritual perception so that they did not hear the voice of God speaking through Christ.

For this reason our Lord attacks the Jewish leaders and shows that they have completely misunderstood the spirit of the Law of which they professed to be the official exponents. They had not understood Christ's healing of the impotent man, and they had failed to see the Spirit of God working in Christ as He had worked since the beginning of creation (cf. v. 17). Thus they were still blinded in their apprehension of that beneficent work of Christ; they could see nothing else except the mere letter of the Law which our Lord had broken. Yet they themselves were often guilty of breaking the letter of the Law. For example, when the need for circumcision on the eighth day caused them to observe the rite on the Sabbath, and thus technically break the letter of the law of Sabbath observance, they saw no harm in it. And yet they challenge Christ's breaking of the letter of the law of the Sabbath in the interests of a sick man, forgetting the law of mercy which should have welcomed the work of healing. It was but a further illustration of the way in which they had hardened their consciences. They judged Christ's actions externally and superficially, and for this reason they could not see the work of God in those actions. The voice of the Rabbis was so continually in their ears that they could not hear the voice of God in Christ. In short, had these Jews really

Cross-Currents of Belief and Unbelief

willed to do the will of Christ there would have been "righteous judgment" (v. 24), which would have seen the Father working in the beneficent acts of Christ. St. John vii. 1-53.

A practical illustration of the perversity of the Jews is seen in what follows. Christ's appeal to their inner consciousness had fallen mainly on deaf ears, and the appeal to test by obedience the truth of God as revealed by Christ passed practically unheeded. So now they appeal either to prejudice or to preconceived ideas about the coming Messiah, in order to discredit Christ. They say first of all that no man is to know where the Messiah is to come from. They think of Isaiah's prophecy, "Who shall declare His generation?" (Isa. liii. 8), and of the words of Malachi, that "the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple" (Malachi iii. 1), and they feel that there is to be a mystery about the coming of the Messiah (cf. also Dan. vii. 13; Micah v. 2). But they knew Christ, and they were aware that He lived in Capernaum (v. 27). There was nothing mysterious in His coming to Jerusalem at that Feast, for they knew where He came from. Therefore He did not fit in with their preconceived ideas that the Messiah must be someone whose appearance would be sudden, striking, and marvellous. Moreover, they believed, and rightly so, that Christ was to come from the royal line of David, and that He was to be born at Bethlehem; but they seem not to know of our Lord's birth in the Bethlehem manger (vv. 41, 42, 52). The position of the Jewish leaders was in a

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John vii. 1-53. sense an understandable one. They were looking to the letter of the Law, and they were looking for the literal fulfilment of their own interpretation of the letter of the Law. Since they could not reconcile our Lord and His claims with what they considered to be the letter of the Law they were prepared to treat Him as a deceiver. Where they were at fault, however, was not only in thinking that they knew everything that was to be known about our Lord, nor only in imagining that they could not reconcile Him with the many prophecies about the manner of His coming. The fundamental weakness of their position was a moral one. The Old Testament Scriptures were important enough for the Jews, but the importance of them both for the Jews as for ourselves is that the voice of God spoke through them. Had the Jewish leaders been in the habit of hearing the voice of God speaking to them through the Old Testament books, they would have recognised the voice of God when Christ spoke. Whatever difficulties they might have had in reconciling their own views of the Messiah and seeing their fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth, such difficulties would have vanished had they really been in the habit of following the voice of God. But the ideas encrusted by the habits of generations are not easily got rid of, and the prejudices of mechanical and external religion are not to be lightly surmounted. So it proved here.

The leading Jews, referred to in verse 32 as "the Pharisees and the chief priests," sent officers to make Christ a prisoner (v. 32). It was the first

Cross-Currents of Belief and Unbelief

definitely hostile act on the part of the authorities, **St. John vii. 1-53.** but though it was the first hostile act, it was no mere outburst of sudden anger which would as suddenly die away. The miracle of the healing of the impotent man revealed something of the intense anger which had been roused, and from that time the Jewish leaders sought our Lord's death (cf. v. 18). By the time of the Feast of the Tabernacles the temper of the rulers was strung up to fanaticism. They sent their officers to arrest our Lord, and they continued sitting in Council awaiting the return of their men (vv. 32, 45). Even on the eighth day of the Feast, a day counted as a Sabbath, the Council continued in session waiting for their officers to bring Christ before them. And their waiting seemed to incense them all the more. When the officers return empty-handed and give their simple testimony to the effect of Christ's words on themselves, the rulers break out into animadversion against the unlearned people. They show their contempt for the rank and file and call them "cursed" because they do not here follow the line taken by the leaders in the interpretation of the law. Moreover, when Nicodemus reminded the Council of the requirements of the Law before condemnation was passed on any man (vv. 50, 51), they merely attempt to crush him with an *ipse dixit* about no prophet coming from despised Galilee (v. 52). The attitude of the Council is worth pondering over, because we shall always find it difficult to understand why men refuse to receive Christ. But the explanation here is that the Jewish rulers merely appeal to

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John vii. 1-53. their own interpretations, and to their own ideas about Galilee. It is preconceived ideas and prejudice which determine everything for them, and so they refuse to hear the voice of God speaking to them through Christ.

“Never
man spake
like this
man.”

But while the perversity of the Jewish leaders is made very plain, it is evident that there was a partial faith among many of those who heard Christ. The miracles which He had performed led some of the people to believe that the Messiah could do no more than Christ had done (*v.* 31). Such people were ready to believe in Christ as a prophet at all events. Others again were quite convinced that in Jesus of Nazareth they saw the prophet long foretold by Moses (*Deut.* xviii. 15), *v.* 40, whilst some were ready to acclaim Him without hesitation as the Christ, the Messiah promised by God (*v.* 40). The people thus favourably inclined to our Lord were mainly to be found amongst the pilgrims to the Feast, and not amongst the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The pilgrims were more open to receive impressions of God's truth, since they were less hidebound by prejudice and traditions, and therefore they were more ready to hear the voice of God speaking in Christ.

But the most striking illustration of the truth which this chapter contains comes from the confession of the officers sent to arrest our Lord (*vv.* 32, 45, 46). They return empty-handed to their superiors, and the reason they give for refusing to execute the order to arrest our Lord is, “Never man spake like this man.” It is not a confession

Cross-Currents of Belief and Unbelief

of faith in the ordinary sense of the term, but it is **St. John**
a very striking testimony on the part of simple- **vii. 1-53.**
minded men to what they felt about Christ. It is
the beginning of faith, for simplicity and openness
of mind always get very near to God. If these
officers felt the uniqueness of our Lord's words, if
they thus felt the voice of God speaking to their
own souls, and if they put into practice what they
felt, it would not be long before they entered the
Kingdom of Christ. And these men had heard the
voice of God, and in one sense they had acted, for
they returned empty-handed to their superiors. It
was a bold thing for subordinate officers, and
explainable only on the ground that they obeyed
the voice of conscience, which told them that the
words of Christ rang true.

Thus this closing section of the chapter gives a
vivid illustration of the truth of what is stated by
our Lord in verse 17. On the one hand is to be
seen the hardening of heart on the part of those
whose minds were clouded by prejudice and who
were entrenched in preconceived ideas. On the
other hand is seen the opening and expanding of
faith to those who both will to hear and to do what
is said by Christ. Such men at all events realised
something of the truth stated by our Lord on the
last day of the Feast: "If any man thirst, let him
come unto Me, and drink" (*v.* 37). As they heard
Christ and acted on His words, so in our Lord's
words they "came" and "quenched their thirst";
and in so doing they would find in Him One Who
satisfied their needs.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John For our edification to-day, therefore, there is a
vii. 1-53. plain lesson in this chapter. We all of us will admit that the words of Christ in the Gospels are the voice of God speaking to men. Sometimes, however, we refuse to accept these words and put them into practice because His commands interfere in some way with our usual ideas. It may be that we have some stereotyped views about religious observances, or that we have long-established views about the way in which God works in the world. For one reason or another, however, our own theories and practice predispose us against the acceptance of some of Christ's commands.

Danger of
precon-
ceived
ideas.

But the full blessings of the Christian faith are never found in such half-hearted devotion to our Lord. The danger of such an attitude is that it keeps us much further from our Master than we ought to be, and consequently we miss much of the happiness obtainable by those who live close to Him.

Hence the importance which lies in our Lord's words, "If any man will," for this raises the primary question of our willingness to hear the voice of God. If our attitude is conditioned by the fact that we have made up our minds to certain actions, or to a certain mode of life or to certain ideas about God, and if we have determined that we are absolutely right and that nothing can alter us—then this is but to copy the example of the Jewish leaders.

But "if any man will . . . he shall know." It is the obedient servant of Christ who gets to know his Master, and it is the man who is content to act

Cross-Currents of Belief and Unbelief

unquestionably on the words of Christ who learns the truth about Christ. This is not a plea necessarily for blind unreasoning obedience, for our Lord never reduces His followers to mere automata. It is, however, an essential truth of the Christian faith that the man who is willing to put the words of Christ into practice is the man who gets nearest to Him. The greater the obedience the greater the friendship with the Master.

St. John
vii. 1-53.

PRAYER

O God, Who hast commanded us to be perfect, as Thou our Father in heaven art perfect; put into our hearts, we pray Thee, a continual desire to obey Thy holy will. Teach us day by day what Thou wouldest have us do, and give us grace and power to fulfil the same. May we never from love of ease decline the path which Thou dost appoint, nor, for fear of shame, turn away from it; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*—(HENRY ALFORD.)

II

SHAMELESS CRITICS OF CHRIST

Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with *his* finger wrote on the ground, *as though he heard them not*. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard *it*, being convicted by *their own* conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.—
ST. JOHN VIII. 1-11.

St. John
viii.

I-II.

ST. JOHN'S narrative of what took place at the Feast of Tabernacles is interrupted by the insertion of an incident not written by St. John himself. The account of the woman taken in adultery is a genuine incident of Gospel history, which was inserted in St. John's Gospel some years after the latter was written. Though the writer of the incident is unknown it indicates some of the char-

Shameless Critics of Christ

acteristics of the rulers of the Jews in their attitude to our Lord, and no doubt found its present place because of this. When the opposition to Christ on the part of the Jewish leaders was hardening, such an incident well illustrates the lengths to which they would go.

St. John
viii.

I-II.

We notice first of all the indelicacy of their action in dragging this woman forward to be a catspaw for themselves; there is a shamelessness about them which is not satisfied in stating the case to Christ, but which insists on bringing the woman forward in this public way. The culprit had evidently not been taken before the Sanhedrin, but these opposers of our Lord have the gracelessness to proclaim that they have caught the woman in the very act of adultery, and they simply use her as an instrument in the hope of extracting a compromising statement from Christ. Moreover, it speaks much for the current Jewish conception of morality that the male culprit is not brought forward with the accused woman. These Scribes and Pharisees declare unblushingly that they have caught the woman "in the very act" of adultery, yet they do not bring forward the adulterous man. They have the common one-sided view of morality which condemns the woman but condones the man, they believe in the dual standard of conduct by which the woman inevitably suffers. So the sinning man is not brought to light here, but the woman is thrust forward to be the stalking-horse to entrap Christ.

Shameless-
ness of the
Jewish
leaders.

We can picture the scene where the accusing

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St. John viii. I-II. Scribes and Pharisees accompanied by a crowd of onlookers throng round our Lord and push before Him the shrinking woman. As she stands there cowering in anticipation of the punishment in store for her, the Jews address Christ with the words, "Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned : but what sayest thou ?" The question was not put for the purpose of obtaining information, for they were well aware of the law on the subject, as their query indicates. Their question was very similar to the inquiry made later on about the tribute money (St. Luke xx. 19-26), and it was put in the hope of bringing Christ into conflict either with the Sanhedrin or the Roman Government. On the one hand they probably thought that because of His preaching about forgiveness of sins He would not agree with the sentence of stoning to death, and therefore He would be in conflict with the Law of Moses (Deut. xxii. 22-24). On the other hand, if He publicly agreed with the penalty of stoning, then He would be infringing on the prerogatives of the Roman authorities, who reserved the execution of capital punishment to themselves. It was an attempt, therefore, to compromise our Lord either with the Jewish authorities or with those of Rome.

Attempt to
compromise
our Lord.

The reply of Christ, however, was far different from what they anticipated. They received no spoken words at first, but they were the recipients of a silent rebuke, for "Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground." His apparent refusal to hear their accusations was a silent protest

A silent
rebuke.

Shameless Critics of Christ

against the line of action they had adopted. Sensitive men might have taken the hint and have quietly withdrawn, but passion often blinds men to the performance of deeds of which they are ashamed in their quieter moments. And so it is here. The shrinking woman and the silent Christ make no appeal to the better feelings of these Jewish leaders. They are incensed with our Lord because of His teaching, and their passion-filled minds have room for nothing but for some way to secure His condemnation. Hence their insistence and continued urging that He will give a plain answer to their question. Their shameless eagerness to compromise our Lord compelled Him at length to break His silence, but His words were no reply to their question, and they were far different to what they anticipated, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

The statement of Christ at once pricked the conscience of His questioners. It was not that Christ accused them of adultery, but His words forced them to think of their own sinful minds and of the possibilities of their own sinful imaginings. The woman whom they accused might be a sinner in deed, but which of them was pure in thought? They only held back from sin through fear of consequences, and not because they loved purity and hated impurity. The words of our Lord therefore went like a searchlight through the minds of the accusing Jews, and gave them a picture of themselves as they really were. It was a challenge to their own consciences, and truly conscience made

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St. John
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I-II.

cowards of them all, for they "went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last." The accusers all departed, leaving Christ alone and the woman standing by herself in the midst of the crowd who had come with her accusers. Then, when the sound of the footsteps of the retreating Jews had died away, our Lord looked up, and with a tone of respect said to the woman, who stood isolated amidst the circle of onlookers, "Woman, where are they? did no man condemn thee?"

There may have been something of sympathy and of pity in the tone of our Lord's voice, and possibly the mode of address, "Lady"—such as He used in speaking to His own Mother—may have appealed to the better instincts of the sinful woman. But whatever the reason, her reply seems significant, for she answers, "No man, Lord." The Jews who had come forward to accuse her had addressed Christ as "Master" or "Rabbi," but she feels from His voice, and in His presence, the sense of a compassion which was not of man. So she gives Him the title not of "Rabbi" but of "Lord." She feels that here is One Who is no mere judge of the Law, One Who is no pedant about the relationship of the Jewish code to the civil regulations of the Romans. There is before her One Who can read her as He read the souls of her accusers, and yet Whose voice rings with tenderness and pity for her in her abject misery. She acknowledges Him therefore as "Lord," for she will serve and follow One Whose tone is of mercy and not of condemnation.

Shameless Critics of Christ

It was then that Christ pronounced the words which gave the sinful woman hope, and which set her feet upon a new way of life: "Neither do I condemn thee," He says: "Go, and sin no more." She had made no confession of guilt, though her whole attitude throughout the interview implied her acknowledgment of guilt; nor had she directly appealed for mercy, possibly because she felt that the Law of Moses contained no mercy for sinners such as she. Therefore there is no promise here such as in St. Matthew ix. 2, "thy sins be forgiven thee," nor is there the assurance "go in peace" as in St. Luke vii. 50. But what we can see is the sin condemned and the sinner spared, no palliative of unrighteousness but a new hope given to the unrighteous. We can well imagine how this sinful woman would afterwards strive to show herself worthy of the merciful treatment meted out to her. We can picture her in the company of those others, such as Mary Magdalene, who strove in such a practical way to minister to the needs of Christ and His disciples. Mercy and hope would issue in a life of purity and of faithful service, by the power of Christ.

We can be thankful, therefore, that this incident has been preserved for our benefit to-day. The actual author of the writing may be unknown, but the story itself bears the impress of the spirit of our Master. As we think about it we may be impressed by various considerations, such as the gracelessness of the Scribes and Pharisees who shrank from no measures in their endeavour to

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I-11.

Hope for
the sinful.

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St. John
viii.
I-II.

entrap our Lord, or, on the other hand, we may marvel at the tenderness and pity of Christ in His treatment of this sinful outcast. For our own meditation, however, we cannot do better than reflect on the truth involved in our Lord's words: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

A call
to self-
examina-
tion.

This should mean self-examination of a very definite kind. It involves self-examination on the lines of our Lord's teaching about purity of thought; it means a close search of our inclinations, our thoughts and our unspoken desires. All that inner self, unknown but to God and ourselves, where we are secretly making or marring our character, the inner private life of ours, should be ruthlessly exposed as in the sight of God.

The result will not be very encouraging for most of us. As we see ourselves as we really are in the sight of our Master we may well say, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isa. vi. 5), or at least, "I am guilty of un-Christlike desires." We may feel like St. Peter did when he felt his own sinfulness before the almighty and all-seeing Christ, and like him we may say, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (St. Luke v. 8). Honest self-examination by the standard of Christ too often will mean humiliation and self-abasement.

But it is only as we see ourselves as in the sight of Christ that we can really expect by His help to grow into the likeness of our Master. There is too often an unconscious hypocrisy which imagines that

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the secret inner life may cherish un-Christlike thoughts and desires, whilst the outward life may follow Christ. In that hypocrisy lies the secret of many a Christian's failure. Our Master knows us as we really are, for there is nothing hidden from Him, and it is our wisdom to see ourselves as in His sight. And unworthy though we may be, there is always hope of better things if we rely upon His power to cleanse us and purify us.

St. John

viii.

I-II.

PRAYER

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.—(Ps. li. 10.)

Almighty God, unto Whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*—*(Book of Common Prayer.)*

III

CHRIST'S DIVINE CLAIM AND THE JEWISH CHALLENGE

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world : he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself ; thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, *yet* my record is true ; for I know whence I came, and whither I go ; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh ; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true : for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father ? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father : if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple : and no man laid hands on him ; for his hour was not yet come. Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins : whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself ? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath ; I am from above : ye are of this world ; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins : for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins. Then said they unto him, Who art thou ? And Jesus saith unto them, *Even the same* that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you : but he that sent me is true ; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am *he*, and *that* I do nothing of myself ; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me : the Father hath not left me alone ; for I do always those things that please

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him. As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed : And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man : how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free ? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever : *but* the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed ; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father : and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God : this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication ; we have one Father, *even* God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me : for I proceeded forth and came from God ; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech ? *even* because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own : for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell *you* the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin ? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me ? He that is of God heareth God's words : ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God. Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil ? Jesus answered, I have not a devil ; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory : there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets ; and thou sayest, if a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead ? and the prophets are dead : whom makest thou thyself ? Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing : it is my Father that honoureth me ; of whom ye say, that he is your God : Yet ye have not known him ; but I know him : and if I should say, I

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know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you : but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day : and he saw *it*, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham ? Jesus said unto them. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him : but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.—ST. JOHN VIII. 12-59.

St. John
viii.

12-59.

Verses
12-19.

OUR Lord's discussions with the Jews at the Feast of Tabernacles, as recorded in chapter vii, had been interrupted by nightfall, but on the next day He continued His teaching about Himself. No doubt the majority of the pilgrims now left Jerusalem, since the last day of the Feast was over (vii. 37), but the discussion which the chief priests had had with their officers and with Nicodemus (vii. 45-53) excited their interest, and it was evidently the representatives of the leading Jews who were prominent in the encounter which now took place.

The Light
of the
world.

Christ's first words were sufficiently arresting for these leading Pharisees who had come to hear for themselves. "I am the light of the world," He said : "he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." It is probable that the simile of Himself as "the Light of the world" was suggested to our Lord by the ceremony of the lighting of the golden candles during the Feast of Tabernacles. The great illumination flooded the whole of Jerusalem with light, and so the application of this ceremony of illumination to the words of Christ was at once apparent. In addition, however, the words of Christ had a Messianic interpretation, for many Old Testament passages

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describe the coming days of the Messiah as a time **St. John**
when the light of God shall shine on Jew and Gentile. **viii.**

For example, in Isaiah ix. the prophet is looking **12-59.**

forward to the Messianic era, and in verse 2 he says, "the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." Similar passages will be found in Isaiah xlii. 6, xlix. 6, lx. 3. Our Lord's words therefore implied a great deal to His hearers. They meant that those who follow Him will be enlightened and that their ideas about God will be made clear; but they also mean that with Him a new day of salvation has appeared for the world.

Such a Messianic claim was at once understood by the Pharisees, but there was nothing in them of the spirit of Simeon who was "waiting for the consolation of Israel," and who saw in Christ "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel" (St. Luke ii. 32). They had no sympathy with Christ, Who had shown Himself so critical of themselves, the official teachers and guardians of the Law. So they make no attempt to test the truth of Christ's statements by putting them to the test of personal experience, and they simply take the pedantic view that our Lord's testimony is unsupported by anyone but Himself. Christ, however, is quite ready to meet them on the legal ground. If they need the testimony of two witnesses (*v.* 17), then there is the testimony both of Himself and of the Father. But the tragedy is, that owing to their outlook being so clouded by

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St. John their own ideas they do not know Christ for who
viii. and what He is, and they do not know the Father
12-59. either. "The glory of God" shone in the Person
of our Lord (cf. 2 Cor. iv. 6) but they did not recognise Christ, and that very fact showed that they did not know the Father also.

Verses
20-29.

The charge of not really knowing God was a very striking one, since it was addressed to the leading Pharisees. St. John seems to feel this, for he remembers that the dialogue took place in the Treasury, which was situated near the meeting-place of the Sanhedrin, and within hearing distance of that august body. For the moment, however, no concerted action was taken against Christ, but it is evident that the resumption of His address marks a tenser atmosphere. He tells the Pharisees that since their own wilful self-blindness was making them incapable of recognising their long-promised Messiah, the time was coming when He will leave them, and when as the result of their sin they will see Him no more. They are mystified at the statement, and jump to the conclusion that He will commit suicide, and so remove Himself from their sight.

Our Lord, however, disabuses their minds of such a degrading idea, and reminds them of the great fact which is blinding them to the truth about Himself. The Jews are of this world, and therefore limited in their outlook. Like all men, they need a spiritual birth (iii. 3) if they wish to know the things of God, but lacking the spiritual birth they cannot know all the truth about Christ, Who

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is not of this world. The eye of flesh cannot read **St. John** the things of the spirit, nor can the mind of man, **viii.** unillumined by the Spirit of God, really know **12-59.** Christ. The Jews, strong in their Rabbinical beliefs, are still in the dark. Again they betray their ignorance of the Person of Christ (*v.* 25), and again they show their inability to grasp His references to the Father (*vv.* 26, 27). So our Lord rounds off His statement by telling them that when they have "lifted up the Son of man," then the truth will be revealed to them. The Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the gift of the Holy Spirit—all these are included in the "lifting up of the Son of man," and our Lord thus prophetically looks forward and sees that these Divine manifestations will show these perplexed Jews that Christ is indeed the Messiah, and one with God the Father Who sent Him into the world.

The immediate result of our Lord's words was **Verses** that "many believed on Him" (*v.* 30), whilst there **30-45.** were also others described as those which "believed Him" (*v.* 31, R.V.). The distinction between "believing on Him" and "believing Him" is the difference between a man who trusts in Christ and a man who believes something told him by Christ; the former is a follower of Christ, but the latter is not necessarily so, since the element of self-surrender is lacking. To the latter body of "believers," therefore, our Lord says, "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know **True** the truth, and the truth shall make you free." **freedom.** The statement was a challenge to those who were hesi-

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12-59

tating to give their adherence to Christ, for He offers them all the treasures of divine truth and all the freedom which that truth brings if they will but follow Him and His teaching.

But these possible believers are above all else Jews (v. 31), and the offer of a truth which will make them free rouses all their national feelings. These men were ready to believe Christ was the Messiah, and, like their countrymen mentioned in St. John vi. 15, they were willing to acclaim and use Him according to their own ideas of what the Messiah should be and do. But the talk of "truth freeing them" was unpalatable; in their anger they think only of political freedom, and they indignantly repudiate the idea that they had been anything but free men. Egyptians, Babylonians, and Romans may be their masters, but the pride of race will not admit that such domination had cost them their freedom.

So Christ tells them plainly that the man who is in the habit of committing sin is no longer a free man, he is "the bondservant of sin," and as a "bondservant" he is not a true member of "the house" of Israel (vv. 34, 35). The Jews are often referred to in the Old Testament as "the house" of God, and the description conveys the idea that they are therefore the children of God. But when they become "the bondservants of sin," then they lose the status of sons and of freemen, and like Hagar they lose their place in the household (cf. Gen. xxi. 10; Gal. iv. 21-v. 1). The Jews might be descended physically from Abraham, but when they refuse to accept Christ's words and when they

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decline to let His teaching guide and control their **St. John** lives, then they show they are not the children of **viii.** God, since all that Christ says is from God. When, **12-59.** moreover, they go so far as to attempt to kill Him, then they show without a doubt that they are not true children of Abraham, for the lust of murder has its origin with the devil and not with the patriarch (cf. 1 John iii. 8).

The discussion grows sharper in tone as Christ **Verses** traces the opposition of the Jews to its satanic **46-59.** origin. It is obvious that the Jewish leaders would **Satanic** not relish the statement that by their bondage to **opposition.** sin they had lost their spiritual heritage in the household of God, and our Lord's assertion that so far from being the children of God they were now showing by their actions that they were the children of the devil, would incense them all the more. The continual interruption of our Lord's address shows how their exasperation was rising, but for the moment they find themselves helpless before the unchallenged purity of His life and character. "Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" says Christ (v. 46, R.V.), and since He was free from sin, then His words were true and trustworthy. If Christ is free from sin, then He is also free from falsehood, and therefore His words are to be believed; but the Jewish leaders deliberately refused to listen to the truth when spoken by Christ. Their refusal to do so showed that they no longer knew God as their fathers did, for, as St. John says in his Epistle, "he that knoweth God heareth us; but he that is not of God heareth not us" (1 John iv. 6).

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The retort of the Jews shows how Christ's words were rousing their passion and hardening them still more, for they declare, "Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil." They have in mind that the Samaritans had intermarried with others than Jews, and thus had not preserved their pure descent from Abraham, and they also are thinking how the Samaritans had put Gerizim in the place of Jerusalem as their centre of worship. For both these reasons the Samaritans were regarded as aliens by the Jews. The feeling of contempt, therefore, was in their retort, and there is a bitter sting in their reply. If Christ tells them that they are not true children of Abraham, then their answer is that Christ is no true Jew, for He is on a level with the Samaritans whom He visits (cf. ch. iv.); like the Samaritans He has lost His true nationality, and He belongs to the children of the devil rather than to the children of Abraham.

Again our Lord seeks to draw the Pharisees away from personal recrimination. He turns aside their angry criticisms and once more concentrates on the main essential truth, that "if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" (v. 51). It is the same point which recurs so often in this narrative, it is the constant appeal to "follow" Him (v. 12) or to "continue" in His word (v. 31). The essence of the Christian faith lies in these statements, for in "following" Christ and in "keeping" His commands is summed up all that we need for our guidance.

But Christ links this up with the promise that he

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who keeps His saying "shall never see death." **St. John**
It is the repetition of what He had said before in **viii.**
Jerusalem (cf. v. 24), but here it is again mentioned **12-59.**
to focus the particular point that Christ has in
mind. He is trying to wean the Jews from the
idea that Abrahamic descent is everything, or that
religion consists in being a member of the chosen
race. True religion consists in hearing and in
following the words of God; these words of God
are revealed by Christ, and therefore in following
Him and His words is the guarantee for eternity.

Passion and pride of race, however, still blind the
minds of the Jews, for they will neither "follow"
Christ nor "hear" His word. They will not face
the truth of Christ's Oneness with God (v. 54).
They see in Christ One Who may possibly be the
Messiah, but yet they look upon Him only as a
man and of less importance than Abraham or the
prophets (v. 53). Holding this view they are not
inclined to "keep His saying," and in consequence
they cannot understand how one who keeps Christ's
words shall never taste of death. Our Lord may
tell them that Abraham had looked with joy to the
coming of Christ and that in heaven the patriarch
was aware of His incarnation; but the Jews merely
saw in Christ One Who was human like themselves,
and they did not comprehend His eternal Being
which was implied in His relationship with the Father.

Therefore our Lord now said quite plainly, "Be-
fore Abraham was, I am," and the words proclaim
His eternal existence and therefore His Divinity.
The statement "I am" declares that Christ exists

The
Eternal
Son.

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from all eternity. He called "the generations from the beginning," as Isaiah xli. 4 puts it, for "before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God" (Ps. xc. 2). In Christ, the eternal Son of God, there is no beginning and no end for He exists from all time (cf. St. John i. 1, 2).

The statement, with all its implications, was too much for the Jews, who had already contemptuously spurned Christ as a Samaritan possessed with a devil. It is not surprising, therefore, that they were exasperated at His statement and that they attempted to stone Him for what they regarded as blasphemy. They were logical at all events. Either Christ is all that His life and words say He is, or (with all reverence be it said) His claims are blasphemous. Men, if they are consistent, cannot choose what they like from the record of His life and say they believe that, and then go on to say that they cannot believe Christ's claims to divinity. Men must face Christ's challenge in verse 46 first of all. If He is sinless, He is without falsehood: if He is without falsehood, His claim to divinity must stand. We cannot have either a fallible Christ or a merely human Christ. It was the self-blindness of the Jewish leaders that caused them to think they heard a fallible Christ, and it was the stubbornness of prejudice which refused in any way to follow His invitation to "continue" in His word. The logical and inevitable outcome was the attempt to put Christ to death.

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In thinking over what is recorded in this chapter there are two great truths which demand careful consideration. St. John viii.
12-59.

In the first place, we must squarely face the alternative that Christ is all He says He is or the Christian world has been mistaken for more than nineteen centuries. Christ is "either God or devil," as it has been bluntly put, and the offensive phrase means that Christ's words show Him to be the Son of God, One with the Eternal Father, or else, as the Jewish leaders declared, He was inspired by the author of lies. Such an alternative repels those of us who call ourselves Christians, but it is the alternative which every man must face if he is honest with himself. A grave alternative.

But as we recoil from the suggestion that Christ is anything but what He said about Himself, do not let us stand merely facing Christ. If there is one thing more than another which this eighth chapter of St. John teaches, it is the need for obedience to the commands of Christ if we are to know all the truth about Him, and if we are to receive His blessings. The continued emphasis upon the need for "following" Him (v. 12), and that we shall "continue" in His word (v. 31), that we shall "hear" or "understand" His word (vv. 43, 47), that we shall "keep" His word (v. 51), and that His word shall have "free course" in us—all these references bring out the same truth. Put Christ to the test, obey His commands, and you will realise for yourself the truth both about Himself and His promises. *Solvitur ambulando* is a not

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viii.
12-59. unworthy motto for the Christian. It merely puts in non-biblical language what the follower of Christ has always found, *i.e.* "O taste, and see, how gracious the Lord is: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him" (Ps. xxiv. 8).

PRAYER

O God, Who declarest Thy almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity; Mercifully grant unto us such a measure of Thy grace, that we, running the way of Thy commandments, may obtain Thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of Thy heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*—(*Book of Common Prayer.*)

IV

THE SIXTH GREAT SIGN

And as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from *his* birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? *Jesus* answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents : but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day : the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he : others *said*, He is like him : *but* he said, I am *he*. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called *Jesus* made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash : and I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the sabbath day when *Jesus* made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet. But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how

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then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. These *words* spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner *or no*, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear *it* again? will ye also be his disciples? Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: *as for this fellow*, we know not from whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and *yet* he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And *some* of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth. —ST. JOHN IX. 1-41.

St. John ix. 1-41 THE course of St. John's narrative shows the diverse effects of our Lord's teaching. On the one hand
Verses 1-7. there was a slowly increasing band of believers who

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trusted Him completely, whilst on the other hand **St. John** there was slowly hardening opposition now develop- **ix. 1-41.** ing into fanaticism. In addition there was a large body of people who were keeping in touch with Christ, but who were neither believers nor unbelievers, since they had not yet made up their minds about Him.

For this reason St. John now introduces the miracle of the healing of the man born blind; and the position of this miracle in the Gospel, just like the rest of the great miracles described by St. John, is important, since we can never lose sight of St. John's deliberate arrangement of his gospel (cf. xx. 30, 31). As we examine the miracle and the results of it, we shall see how it is directly related to the great truth, "I am the light of the world," recorded of our Lord in viii. 12.

The incident is introduced in the most informal way. Probably on the day after our Lord had escaped from the hands of the Pharisees (viii. 59), He and His disciples were journeying together when they came across a blind man. The encounter took place evidently at one of the gates of the Temple, since this was a place frequented by beggars (cf. Acts iii. 2), and this man no doubt was well known, since he had had to beg for his living for some years (v. 8). At the outset it is striking to notice the difference in the attitude of Christ and of His disciples to the sufferer. The disciples merely see in the blind man a subject for speculation on the much-debated question of the origin of evil, and of the transmission of the results of sin. The subject

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St. John was one of every-day discussion, and the disciples
ix. 1-41. were typical of their age in imagining that infants could sin even in a pre-natal existence (*v.* 2) (cf. Jer. i. 5). Our Lord's attitude to the disciples was a reproof to their absence of thought for the sufferer, and His reply is typical of His answer to all such queries. He sees in the blind man not a subject for speculation, but a man to be helped; not a case for elaborating a theory, but a human being in need of assistance. Neither the man himself nor his parents had brought on this blindness through their own sin, but the man's infirmity was an opportunity for Christ to show His healing power and thus to reveal the love of God (*v.* 3).

The next step is significant of the purpose of the miracle and shows why it is really a "sign," as St. John calls the miracles he describes. Our Lord first of all declares, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me" (*v.* 4), and also, "I am the light of the world" (*v.* 5). The connection of these two statements with the discourse given in chapter viii is apparent, since our Lord in that discourse was stressing the fact that He was doing the work that God had sent Him to do, and that in doing it He was the Light of the world. The words, however, are addressed to the blind man and to the people standing around, not merely to remind them of what He had said the day before, but in order to link His statement with the miracle which He now proceeded to perform.

Our Lord first of all makes clay from spittle and dust, and then anoints the eyes of the blind man

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with the clay. In this we have something unusual, **St. John** for practically all the other miracles of healing performed by Christ were the work of a moment. But the preparations in this case seem to be in the nature of an acted parable, and serve to show something of the difficulty involved in bringing sight to the blind. **ix. 1-41.**

We notice further the order to the man to "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam," which was not far distant from the Temple. There is an important truth involved also in this. The man himself is forced to take an active part in his own healing, for the walk to Siloam and the washing in the pool compelled him to take a share in bringing to himself the coveted sight. It was not a mere passive faith in Christ which was shown by the man, but an active and responsive faith which by obedience to Christ's commands secured him the boon of seeing. **Faith co-operates.**

The miracle is a striking one, especially when **Verses 8-38.** considered in the light of a "sign" which reveals both Christ's power to give light and also the need for responsive action on man's part to secure the light. The narrative which follows, however, is equally striking, and more particularly in its revelation of the progression of faith on the part of the blind man. He starts without any knowledge of Christ so far as we know, though it is quite probable that he had heard something of Him from others. At all events, when Christ and His disciples stood before him, he listened to their discussion with eagerness, for the answer of Christ (v. 3) was

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St. John ix. 1-41. more charitable than the usual condemnation that fell from the passers-by. Moreover, when our Lord spoke of doing "the works of God" and when He referred to Himself as "the light of the world," hope was kindled in the man. Hence, when he was ordered to go to Siloam and wash, he obeyed without question and so received his sight.

It will be noticed that the faith of the man at the outset was very limited in its character. He had some faith in Christ and he acted on it, but it was not faith in Christ as the Son of God. When he is called upon by his neighbours to account for his recovered sight, he refers to our Lord merely as "a man that is called Jesus" (v. 11). So again when he is brought before the Pharisees to give an account of himself, and when he is called upon to say something about his Healer, he can go no further than the statement, "He is a prophet" (v. 17).

The sincerity and faithfulness of the man are apparent, however. The Jewish leaders are inclined to scout the statement of the man that he had been blind and called his parents to verify it (v. 18). In their answer the latter acknowledge their son, but they disclaim any knowledge of how his sight had been restored, and they refer the authorities to their son, since he was of an age to answer for himself. In verse 22 St. John gives the reason why the parents answered in this way. The threat of excommunication had been levelled by some of the authorities against any Jew who confessed Christ. Such a threat involved not merely public degradation, but also a boycott from all religious privileges

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and from all social intercourse for anyone who fell under the ban of the authorities. This was the reason why the parents of the healed man refused to commit themselves, but the man himself never wavered in his testimony. The rulers may say that Christ is not of God (*v.* 16) and that He is a sinner (*v.* 24), but the healed man clings to the fact that Christ has brought him sight. The leaders may be ignorant of the origin of Christ (*vv.* 29, 30), but the bringing of light to his blinded eyes is something which no amount of talk can gainsay. Whatever other men may think, he feels that He Who has performed such an unprecedented thing as giving him sight must be of God (*v.* 33).

The healed man paid the penalty for his fidelity to what he knew of Christ. He was "cast out" (*v.* 34) from the room where he was being interrogated, excommunication followed, and he became a pariah, a religious and social leper to his fellows. In this condition our Lord met him, or rather the words "found him" (*v.* 35) imply that Christ went out of His way to seek the man who had been so cruelly treated for his faithfulness to his Benefactor. And when Christ met him He put to him the question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and the answer given is, "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" The very answer shows that the man had had no conception hitherto that Christ was the Son of God. The title "Son of God" had a Messianic significance, and yet the healed man seemed to have no inkling that his Healer was even the Messiah. But the willingness

St. John
ix. 1-41.

The penalty
of fidelity.

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St. John of the man and his faith in Christ are shown by his
ix. 1-41. questioning answer. As soon, therefore, as our Lord reveals Himself as the Son of God he falls at His feet, confessing by his "worship" (v. 38) his faith in Christ as the "Son of God."

The miracle, and the subsequent story of the healed man, is therefore on the one side a sign of the great truth that the man, who is faithful and obedient to what he knows of Christ, and to what he hears from Him, will find himself sooner or later in full knowledge of the Person of Christ and in humble adoration at His feet. It teaches us that Christ "the light of the world" is always there working the works of God, and that as we open our minds and souls to Him, He shines within us, illuminating us by His Presence, and we learn to know the nearness of One Who is our Saviour and our Eternal Friend.

On the other hand, the narrative shows the impossibility of convincing and influencing those who have shut up their minds against the claims of Christ. We see first of all how the Jewish leaders refused to believe in the miracle because of the association of Christ with it (v. 18). Then when they cannot get away from the fact, they say that Christ is not of God because He performs miracles of healing on the Sabbath (v. 16). Their blind prejudice carries them further, and they go to the length of asserting that Christ is a sinner for breaking the ritual of Sabbath observance (v. 24). And so, strong in the confidence of their own adherence to the Mosaic law as taught by the Rabbis, they

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unhesitatingly prefer Moses to an unknown Person such as Christ (*vv.* 28, 29). **St. John ix. 1-41.**

The consideration of the attitude of these leaders of the Jews shows how impossible it is to help those who wilfully blind themselves to the truth, and who persistently refuse to take one step forward to test the claims of Christ by their own experience. **Danger of wilful blindness.**

So our Lord sums up the lesson of this great sign in the words, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." The miracle makes the meaning of the statement clear. The blind man who received his sight is a type of the class of men who, for reasons not of their own making, do not know Christ. They may be handicapped by the fact that they have not had the opportunity of learning to know Him, and therefore they are ignorant of Who He is and what He can mean to them. In no sense do they know Him as One Who illumines them with the light and knowledge which is of God and not of man. Their ignorance, however, is the ignorance of those who feel that ignorance, and thus are eager for knowledge. Hence when Christ draws near to them, they are quite ready to step forward to Him; they are willing to hear and accept His words, and they are anxious to act upon all He invites them to do. As they do so they advance into the light of Him Who is the "Sun of their soul." **Verses 39-41.**

The Pharisees, however, are the type of those who deceive themselves with the idea that they are in possession of all the knowledge of God possible;

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St. John they pride themselves on their knowledge, and they
ix. 1-41. are confident that they have no further need of enlightenment. To such people the claims of Christ seem incomprehensible, and they wilfully decline either to examine those claims or to make the slightest advance towards Him. The feeling of self-satisfaction means for them a hardening of spiritual prejudices, it inevitably results in an incapacity to see the things of God in a true light, and it runs the danger that the little light already possessed may fade away into darkness. So when such men stand before Christ and His claims upon them, they are like the Pharisees with their indignant cry "Are we blind also?" Our Lord's answer is the condemnation of all those who wilfully blind themselves in this way. "If ye were blind," He says, "ye should have no sin, but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." He says in effect that those who are ignorant of Him and who are spiritually blind through lack of the opportunity of knowing Him are not to be condemned, for such blind ignorance is no sin. But when men are brought face to face with Christ, and when His claims and offers are put before them and they are deliberately rejected, it is quite another matter. To refuse obedience to Christ because of our own preconceived ideas of God and of God's method of working is to place ourselves in the category of the self-opinionated Pharisees, whose spiritual eyes were blinded by the self-satisfied feeling that they knew all that was to be known of God and of His working, and who therefore refused to accept Christ.

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Therefore let our meditation on this chapter force **St. John** us again to stand face to face with Christ, and ask **ix. 1-41.** ourselves in which class we are placing ourselves. Are we like the self-opinionated Pharisees with our minds closed against any of our Lord's teaching which does not happen to fit in with our own ideas? That way lies spiritual darkness and the eventual denial of Christ. Or are we like the blind man eager for greater light from Christ, responsive to His commands, and following unquestionably where He directs? If so, then full light from Him will shine in upon us, we shall see fully in the spiritual sense, and we shall learn to know Him "Who is invisible."

PRAYER

O God, Whom to know is life eternal, we pray Thee to sow the seed of eternal life in our hearts, that whatsoever in Thy holy word we may profitably learn, we may indeed fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*—
(Adapted from the *Book of Common Prayer.*)

THE SHEPHERD, THE SHEEP AND THE FOLD

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

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There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. I and *my* Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father *is* in me, and I in him. Therefore they sought again to take him; but he escaped out of their hand.—ST. JOHN x. 1-39.

THE picture of Christ as the Good Shepherd is one St. John that gripped the imagination of Christians from the x. 1-39. very beginning. We read St. Peter's references to our Lord as the "chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. v. 4) and as "the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Pet. ii. 25), and we see that the disciple is treasuring up the beautiful symbolism which he heard from the lips of his Master. We step outside the pages of the New Testament and we find the same picture printed

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St. John on the minds of the early Christian people. The
x. 1-39. catacombs in Rome show us how in the days of persecution Christians drew their pictures of Christ as the Good Shepherd on the walls of their hiding-places. In later years still, men loved to recall their Master in the same way by painting Him as a young and vigorous Shepherd with the bloom of vigorous youth upon Him, caring for the sheep who looked up to Him. So also with most of us to-day, one of our earliest ideas of Christ is associated with Him in the character of the Good Shepherd: the love and compassion and self-sacrifice of Christ have been summarised for us in the thought that He was the Good Shepherd Who protected His sheep, and Who laid down His life for them. We shall see, however, that this description of Himself comes at a crucial point in our Lord's public life, and just when the opposition of the Scribes and Pharisees was coming to a head.

The events following on the healing of the man born blind had revealed the hardening of the hearts of the Jewish leaders. The prejudice aroused in their minds by our Lord's contravention of the rules of Sabbath observance (cf. ix. 16) had slowly developed into a rigid refusal to take any positive step to test the truth of His self-revelation. The inevitable result was the blinding of their spiritual senses so that they proved unable to see the truth (cf. ix. 39-41). Christ therefore now comes to a dividing of the ways, and the description of Himself as the Good Shepherd serves to mark the contrast between Himself and the Jewish leaders who had proved

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themselves unfaithful shepherds of the Jewish people. St. John
x. 1-39.

Our Lord first of all describes a simple scene with which the Jews would be very familiar. He pictures an ordinary sheepfold, into which the shepherds lead their flocks at night-time to safeguard them from thieves and wild beasts. The fold is merely a space enclosed by a comparatively low wall, or palisade, and is open to the sky. Into such a fold several flocks of sheep are taken, and they are left there for the night in the care of an under-shepherd or porter, who fastens the door of the fold from the inside. In the morning the shepherd comes, and in the way characteristic of the East calls his own particular sheep by their names, and leads them out to take them to the pasture grounds. By contrast with the shepherd of the sheep Christ refers to the thief or robber who forces his way into the fold by scaling the wall or palisade. His presence in the fold in this illegitimate way is for purposes of theft; he is a stranger to the flocks, who in consequence will not follow him, but will scamper away from him. The
sheepfold.

The particular point of the analogy or parable did not strike those who were listening to our Lord's words, for St. John says, "they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them." Such lack of comprehension seems a little difficult to understand at first sight, because the Old Testament is full of such analogies as that used by Christ. The prophets and psalmist frequently referred to

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St. John Israel as "a flock" and to God as the "shepherd"
x. 1-39. of Israel, whilst the name of "shepherds of Israel" was often also given to the leaders of the people; as will be seen in such passages as Isa. xl. 11, Jer. xxiii. 1-4. The spiritual blindness, however, to which our Lord had so pointedly referred in St. John ix. 39-41 still held the leaders of the Jews: and, moreover, since they in no wise regarded themselves as unfaithful "shepherds" of the Jewish people they would not be ready to apply the analogy to themselves. For this reason they would not think of Christ as the "shepherd," nor would they think of themselves as the "stranger."

Verses
7-18.

It seems very clear, however, that our Lord Himself had in mind also the picture drawn in Zechariah xi. where God tries to rescue His flock by dismissing the unfaithful shepherds and feeding them Himself. So He goes on now to make His meaning quite plain. He likens Himself to "the door" of the sheepfold; He is in effect the way by which His sheep may pass into the safety of the fold, and by which their life may be secured and enriched. Then He changes the metaphor and likens Himself to the Good Shepherd who owns the sheep, who knows every one of the flock individually, and whose love for the sheep is so great that He will freely give His life to safeguard them. Four times over does Christ state the fact that as the Good Shepherd He will freely lay down His life for His sheep (*vv.* 11, 15, 17, 18).

Robbers
and
hirelings.

But then He draws the sinister other side. There are "thieves and robbers" whose coming to the fold

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simply means destruction and death to the sheep. St. John
There are "hirelings" who have no interest in their flock, and who are not prepared to make any sacrifice for their charges when danger threatens them. x. 1-39.
In these analogies we have the parabolic statements, the plain truth of which our Lord put so ruthlessly on other occasions. He repeatedly attacked the Scribes and Pharisees as men who "devour widows' houses" (St. Matt. xxiii. 14), He condemned the lawyers as men who "have taken away the key of knowledge" of God (St. Luke xi. 52), and He pronounced His woes upon the Jewish leaders for barring the kingdom of heaven to men (St. Matt. xxiii. 13). These are the people who are on a par with the thieves and robbers, and who only have the self-interest of the mere hireling.

For the moment the listening Jewish leaders show no resentment at Christ's words, and therefore He proceeds to round off His statement by mentioning two further truths. In the first place, He makes it clear that He is going to death. The analogy of the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep passes into the prophecy that He Himself is to lay down his life. But our Lord shows that there is no compulsion about it. He says, "No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." The self-blindness of the Jews may lead to their rejection of Him, but however much their hatred of Him may develop, His destiny lies in His own hands, not in those of the Jews. If the road to Calvary is to be the way for Him, He is not to be driven there against His will. When the false shepherds of Israel have

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St. John conspired against the Good Shepherd, it is not their
x. 1-39. hatred which will work His death. Calvary was in the will of the Father, and that was the reason why Christ was willing to die.

“ Other
sheep I
have.”

In the second place, we see how the Cross of Calvary is inseparably wrapped up with the salvation of the whole world. The Good Shepherd is to lay down His life, to bring life, and “abundant life” (v. 10), to the sheep. But the sheep are not confined to the Jewish flock. Our Lord says, “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice,” and in this He is referring to the whole race of men outside the Jews. Our Lord’s mission was primarily to His own people (St. Matt. xv. 24), but His attitude to the non-Jews who crossed His path, such as the Samaritans (St. John iv.), or the Roman centurion (St. Matt. viii. 5-13), showed that His love was not confined to the Jews. His last command also, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations” (St. Matt. xxviii. 19), left no doubt as to His intentions; His coming was for the benefit of the whole of mankind “and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name AMONG ALL NATIONS” (St. Luke xxiv. 47) (cf. also St. John xi. 51, 52).

Not one
fold but
one flock.

In this connection, moreover, we must always bear in mind the real intention of Christ. In the Authorised Version we read, “there shall be one FOLD and one shepherd” (v. 16), but the Revised Version gives the correct translation as “they shall become one FLOCK, one shepherd.” The difference in the translation is important, because the Revised Version

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indicates the world-wide scope of our Lord's mission. **St. John**
There may be, and will be, different "folds" among **x. 1-39.**
His followers, those "folds" will be differentiated
according to nationality, and they will be differen-
tiated also according to their varying methods of
organisation. But so long as these "folds" are in the
charge of Christ, and so long as those in the "folds"
know Christ and are known of Him by the power
of His redeeming death (*vv.* 14, 15), then they will all
become "one flock" under the "one Shepherd,"
our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This truth has a
distinct bearing on the question of Christian re-
union, which is so much in the minds of men to-day.
Those who follow our Lord's words which we are just
considering will be prepared for the union which was
in the mind of Christ, viz. a union which still can
recognise the separate "folds," but all under the
leadership of the great Shepherd who laid down His
life for us.

The arresting statements made by our Lord **Verses**
roused the usual conflict of opinion amongst the **19-31.**
Jews. The self-assured and self-blinded leaders
dismissed His words contemptuously (*v.* 20),
but there were others upon whom the memory of
the healing of the blind man still lingered, and they
were not led away by the fanatical attitude of their
religious leaders. So it was the usual mixed
throng of people who subsequently confronted Christ
in Solomon's porch, where He evidently taught
people on occasion (*cf.* Acts iii. 11; v. 12). But it is
"the Jews," *i.e.*, the self-satisfied leaders, who come

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St. John forward and demand from our Lord a plain declaration whether He is the Christ or not. Again, however, they are reminded of His statements made, for example, to the Samaritan woman (iv. 26), and to the man born blind (ix. 37), and they are reminded also that our Lord's works testified to the same truth. But they had always refused the evidence which had been put before them, and the reply of our Lord rings again with the note which He is continually sounding at this time. "My sheep **HEAR** My voice," He says (v. 27), it is the "hearing" or obedience to Christ which alone can produce intimate knowledge of Him. But the Jewish leaders are not numbered among His sheep for the simple reason that they will not "hear," they will not give obedience to Christ. It was the same charge which our Lord made against them in viii. 47, "he that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." Wilful disobedience to Christ's words will never lead men to know the truth about Him, and disobedience left the religious leaders of the Jews outside the number of His followers. For those who do obey, however, there is the close union of Christ with them (v. 27), and there is the added promise of eternal life and eternal safety (v. 28). And the great guarantee of this is the unity of Christ with the Eternal Father; the pledge of the Eternal God is behind the offer of eternal life to those who "hear" Christ or put their trust in Him (vv. 29-30).

Verses
32-39.

Since the Scribes and Pharisees had persistently refused to "hear" our Lord's words, it is not sur-

The Shepherd, the Sheep and the Fold

prising that in their self-blindness they once again attempted to stone Him for what they considered blasphemy. It seemed blasphemous for anyone in human flesh to put Himself on a level with God. They had wilfully blinded themselves to the truth about Christ. They had their own preconceived ideas of how God works in the world, and they shut up their minds to all else. It is for this reason that our Lord's miracles are either explained away or are declared to be the work of the evil one, and hence they were in no sense "signs" for them. Moreover, they will not "hear" His words and they won't accept His invitations, and so they remain in their spiritual darkness. Christ therefore only appears to them as a man, mysterious and uncommon it is true, and One, moreover, Who excites their wonder. The query of verse 24 is the question of men wistful to know the Messiah, but it is the same men who want to stone Christ a few minutes later (v. 31). The reason is that they want the Messiah on their own terms, not on those laid down by Christ, and so the charge of blasphemy comes inevitably to their lips.

In vain does our Lord try to reason with them. He reminds them how the Psalmist says of the Jewish rulers, "Ye are gods" (Ps. lxxxii. 6), and he means by this that those rulers are God's representatives acting in His name. But if there was nothing of blasphemy in describing those rulers as "gods," how much less of blasphemy was there in Christ calling Himself the Son of God. Those Jewish rulers had shown their authority by the

St. John
x. 1-39.
The
charge of
blasphemy.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John manner in which they ruled according to God's
x. 1-39. commands; and our Lord by His works had shown to an infinitely greater degree His close relationship to God. If those rulers could be regarded as "gods," then Christ Himself must be supremely greater. He was doing the works of the Father, and that should make them believe "that the Father is in Me, and I in Him" (v. 38).

Prejudice and self-blindness, however, had carried the leading Jews beyond the possibility of calm reflection, and the reiteration of the unity of Christ with the Father simply roused them again to attempt to seize Him. The attempt was unsuccessful, but the hostile act compelled our Lord to retire from Jerusalem to the more sympathetic neighbourhood of Perea, preparatory to His final return to Jerusalem and to Calvary.

It will be apparent, therefore, how this chapter marks the parting of the ways between our Lord and the leaders of the Jews. If the healing of the blind man, recorded in chapter ix., had revealed anything, it showed that men themselves must play their part if they wish to receive light from Christ. The lesson of the sign had been reiterated again and again by our Lord, viz. that men must HEAR and OBEY if they wish to know the truth about Christ. That lesson was completely lost on the Jewish leaders, and their darkened minds were now intent on the forcible removal of Christ from their path.

For this reason also our Lord likens Himself to the Good Shepherd, and contrasts Himself with the Jewish leaders, who are but thieves and robbers

The Shepherd, the Sheep and the Fold

and hirelings, and no true shepherds of the Jewish flock. As the Good Shepherd Christ will lead out His own flock from among the Jews, and by His atoning death will draw men everywhere to Himself as the author and giver of life. **St. John x. 1-39.**

For our own meditation, therefore, let us think of what Christ as the Good Shepherd means to ourselves.

It means that we have in Him one Who is our Guide, our Leader and our Protector. Life's experiences force us sooner or later to the realisation of our own weakness and instability, but in Christ the Good Shepherd we have One Whose guidance and protection will ever keep us on the right road, if we will only follow Him. **Relation of Christ to His followers.**

In Christ the Good Shepherd, moreover, is the truth of the close connection of Christ with each of His followers. "He calleth His own sheep by name." This is literally true of His relationship with His followers. When He was upon earth He addressed Peter by his name, just as He called Mary by her name. When He was ascended on high He called Saul by his name. There is a personal and individual relationship for Christ with every one of His followers. And this personal relationship develops into a depth of intimacy which no man knows but those who follow Him and serve Him. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," and the blessings which come from close friendship with Christ are for those who live closely with Him (cf. St. John xv. 11).

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John
x. 1-39. Above all is the knowledge that in Christ is "life," and the "more abundant life" for which men seek. True living is godly living, and "the more abundant life" is a life lived out by the power of Christ. When our Lord says, "I give unto them eternal life" (v. 28), He offers us a life which is of heaven and not of earth; and in and through Him that eternal life can begin now. It is from Him, therefore, that the "more abundant life" comes, for the life which we shall one day enjoy in heaven can be entered upon here and now.

PRAYER

O Shepherd of the sheep, Who didst promise to carry the lambs in Thine arms, and to lead us by the still waters, help us to know the peace which passeth understanding. Give us to drink that heavenly draught which is life, the calm patience which is content to bear what God giveth. Have mercy upon us, and hear our prayers. Lead us gently when we pass through the valley of the shadow of death. Guide us, till at last, in the assembly of Thy saints, we may find rest for evermore. *Amen.*—(GEORGE DAWSON.)

VI

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode. And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there.—ST. JOHN x. 40-42.

Now a certain *man* was sick, *named* Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was *that* Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to *his* disciples, Let us go into Judæa again. *His* disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him. Then when Jesus came, he found that he had *lain* in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus

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was coming, went and met him : but Mary sat *still* in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give *it* thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this ? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord : I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly, and came unto him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him ? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him ! And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died ? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh : for he hath been *dead* four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God ? Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always : but because of the people which stand by I said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes : and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.—ST. JOHN XI. 1-45.

The Raising of Lazarus

THE attempt on the part of the Jewish leaders to seize Christ led to His withdrawal from Jerusalem. **St. John x. 40-42;** It was evident that His death was a project which **xi. 1-45.** was now becoming uppermost in the minds of the **St. John x. 40-42.** Scribes and Pharisees, and as a matter of fact it was only about four months before Christ did actually hang upon the Cross. Our Lord therefore departed to the region of Perea where the Baptist had exercised his ministry, and where He Himself had submitted to baptism at the hands of John (cf. i. 28; iii. 23; and St. Mark i. 1-11). It was a place full of sacred associations for Christ. There it was that the Baptist had spoken the solemn prediction, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (i. 29); it was the place where the Spirit of God had descended like a dove upon Him, and there also the voice of God spoke in approval of Christ's devotion to the will of the Father (St. Matt. iii. 13-17). The life-work of Christ had opened out to Him in Perea beyond Jordan, and it seems that our Lord deliberately retired to this place because of its stirring memories, so that He might be strengthened to face the Cross which was beginning to loom large before Him. Here, out of reach of the now aggressive opposition of the Jewish leaders, Christ taught the more unprejudiced Galileans, with the result that many gave Him their complete adherence; they "believed on" Him.

While he was thus pursuing His ministry, Lazarus, **St. John xi. 1-15.** one of our Lord's followers in Bethany, fell ill. The sickness was probably one of the sudden fevers which **The illness of Lazarus.** so often proved fatal in Palestine, and his two sisters

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St. John Martha and Mary, knowing the seriousness of his
x. 40-42; condition, sent the news to Christ with the implied
xi. 1-45. request for His help. The reply of our Lord to the message is important, because it indicates that the whole of what follows is premeditated for a definite purpose. He tells the messenger, and those about Him, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby," and from this we infer that the great miracle, which was performed subsequently, was in the mind of Christ, and that it was to be used for the glory of God and for the glory of Christ. The revelation of Divine power in the raising of Lazarus would cause men to believe more fully in Christ, and in this sense it would be for His glory; but it would also be the climax in the series of events which were hurrying Him to Calvary, where His Death and subsequent Resurrection would also be for His glory (cf. vii. 39; xii. 16, 23; xiii. 31, 32). It is evident that by the time our Lord received the message about the illness of Lazarus, the latter had already died. For another two days after the messenger had departed, He remained in Perea, and then on the day following He declared His intention to go to Judea again. This proposal caused a certain amount of apprehension to the disciples (v. 8); they remembered the attempts to stone Christ (cf. x. 31), and they could not understand why He should expose Himself to danger again. In the somewhat mysterious reply mentioned in verses 9 and 10 our Lord indicated that His actions were quite clear to Himself however dark they might seem to the

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disciples; He knew the road He was travelling, and **St. John** He was aware that it led to Calvary, but He was **x. 40-42;** living in the light of God's revealed will, and His **xi. 1-45.** death could only happen in accordance with that will. So He told them next that Lazarus was asleep in death, and that for the sake of the disciples He had kept away from the sick man. What He was going to do now, however, was for the purpose of strengthening the faith of the disciples, and to deepen their views about Himself.

The twenty-five-miles journey from Perea to **Verses** Bethany was thus undertaken, and it was entered **16-27.** upon by the disciples as a desperate venture. The cry of Thomas, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him," is the expression of a man who feels that he is entering upon a forlorn hope, but who nevertheless is determined to be faithful to his Leader even to the point of death. By the time that our Lord reached Bethany, Lazarus had been dead four days, and it was therefore to a house of mourning that He was making His approach. Before He reached the house, however, Martha had heard of His coming. No doubt in accordance with what we read elsewhere (*i.e.* St. Luke x. 38), Martha was busy with domestic affairs, whilst Mary was in an inner room surrounded by friends who had come to offer their condolences in the manner characteristic of the East (1 Sam. xxxi. 13; 1 Chron. x. 12; Job ii. 13). Martha therefore received the news that Christ was approaching, and, without telling her sister, hurried off at once to meet Him. The record of the conversation which ensued is very important. Martha

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St. John greets our Lord with the thought uppermost in her **x. 40-42**; mind, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother **xi. 1-45**. had not died." The statement is not tinged with reproach as some writers have imagined; it is simply the expression of a sorrowing heart which believes that Christ by His Presence might have prevented the death of a beloved brother. The continuance of Martha's statement, however, shows a striking limitation to her thoughts about Christ, for she goes on to say, "But I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." Her words show that she had not fully grasped all that Christ had taught about the gift of eternal life to all who believed in Him. Martha's idea simply is that God will hear the prayer of Christ and restore her brother; there is no conception of the truth that life is obtainable from Christ Himself. The same limitation is evident when Christ says, "Thy brother shall rise again," for she merely replies, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Her answer shows that she merely holds the idea, common to many Jews of the time, that there will be a future resurrection for her brother (cf. Dan. xii. 2; St. Matt. xxii. 31; 2 Macc. vii. 9, 14, 23, 36), but such a resurrection is not associated with her thoughts of Christ.

**Martha and
the Resur-
rection.**

Hence our Lord stated plainly, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?" His statement summed up

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everything that He had previously taught upon the subject of eternal life. Martha's mind is now focussed upon the truth that Christ Himself is the Life of men, and that this Life is freely given to all who believe in Him. Therefore since He is the Life of men He is the Resurrection as well, for the one is the result of the other. Our Lord's words consequently brought Martha face to face with Himself. All thoughts of Christ pleading to God for the life of her brother faded away before the truth enunciated now so emphatically. Only the eternal God, the Spring and Source of Life, could give such Life to men, and she acknowledged her faith that Christ was all He said by declaring, "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

St. John
x. 40-42;
xi. 1-45.

The interview roused great hopes in the mind of Martha, and she hurried back to her sister with the message that "the Master is come, and calleth for thee." The message was given secretly, with the evident intention that only the two sisters might return to Christ. Jerusalem, however, was only about two miles away, and a large number of friends had come from the city to mourn with the sisters. Hence when Mary left the house after receiving Martha's message, the mourning friends immediately followed her, intending as they thought to mourn with her at the grave of Lazarus. Mary, however, hurried to meet our Lord, and as soon as she reached Him she fell at His feet with the same heart-broken cry that her sister had uttered, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." The

Verses
28-45.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John x. 40-42; xi. 1-45. repetition of the cry stirred the veriest depths of compassion in Christ, for He "was moved with indignation in the spirit, and He troubled Himself" (v. 33 R.V. margin). It seemed as though the thought of what the separation of death meant to human hearts roused our Lord to a remarkable degree. There was something of wrath and anger on the part of Christ against the power of death. But with His wrath there was also a striking sympathy with the bereaved, for He could not keep back the tears from His eyes. The whole company eventually made their way to the tomb of Lazarus, the whereabouts of which our Lord had inquired. When they stood before the tomb the sense of sorrow seemed helpless in the near presence of death. Some of the Jews had a lurking belief that Christ might possibly have prevented the death of Lazarus, but Martha feels the utter impossibility of anything being done now for her brother, since he had been dead four days. She evidently had the common Jewish idea that the spirit of a dead person lingered about the body for three days after death, and her reference to the "four days" seems to say that nothing could now be done. In spite of her previous confession of faith in Christ as the Resurrection and the Life, her grief makes her feel that her brother is now beyond the help even of Christ.

Our Lord, however, told Martha, just as He had told the disciples (v. 4), that glory would result from the sorrow, and it seemed as though He was lifting her brooding thoughts away from her morbid ideas about corruption, to the glory of God. By this time

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the stone covering the entrance to the tomb had St. John been removed, and Christ now stepped forward and **x. 40-42;** lifted up His voice in audible prayer. The words of **xi. 7-45.** His prayer reminded the bystanders of His intimate unity with the Father Who had sent Him into the world, for it was as the Incarnate God, in union with the eternal Father, that Christ was about to act in this the greatest of all His miracles. So standing before the tomb "He cried, with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth," and at the command of Christ "Lazarus, life came again to the dead man, and Lazarus came **come forth!**" forth from the tomb, bandaged from head to foot in the customary manner of the East. We can imagine the amazement of the bystanders as they saw the once-dead man coming through the doorway of the tomb, and we can picture them thunderstruck and unable to move as they saw Lazarus; but the words of Christ, "Loose him, and let him go," brought them to the help of their friend who had been so miraculously brought back from death to life.

The result of the great miracle was that many of the Jerusalem Jews now believed on Christ. The evidence of the life-giving power of our Lord was sufficient for many who were living even in the midst of the influence of the Scribes and Pharisees, and they gave their full adherence to Christ.

In this, therefore, the purpose of our Lord's signs or miracles is fulfilled. Anyone who traces the lessons of the seven great miracles in St. John's Gospel will see that each of them is a link in a progressive series which has its climax in the raising of

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St. John Lazarus. The turning of the water into wine, for **x. 40-42**; instance, showed our Lord's power over the world **xi. 1-45**. of nature, and therefore over human nature. Then the healing of the nobleman's son revealed how faith in Christ could secure life, whilst the restoration of the paralytic man to health showed that human nature even when corrupted by sin could be given new life by faith in Christ. His feeding of the five thousand showed How He could miraculously give food to sustain life, whilst the walking on the water revealed Him as the master of material things and not subordinate to them or hindered by them. The giving of sight to the blind man made it clear that an active faith was necessary to secure light and life. Before the grave of Lazarus, however, our Lord made it clear beyond question that He is the Author and Giver of Life, and that all the aspirations of mankind for the perfect and eternal life are met by Him Who called Lazarus from the tomb.

So in our reflections upon this great miracle we can rest our thoughts upon at least three great truths.

The
life-giving
power of
Christ.

First of all the miracle places beyond shadow of doubt that in Christ is the life-giving power of God the Author of Life, and that His life-giving power is greater than the power of death. In this every believer in Christ will find the greatest comfort. The power of death is so very real to us; our friends, old and young, are taken from us, and the natural effect of increasing years makes us look upon death

The Raising of Lazarus

as something inevitable which puts a limit to human life. But over against the fact of death we can place the life-giving power of Christ. It is a power which bridges the gap of death, and it carries us from the thought of a mere human existence of, it may be, threescore years and ten, to the fact of an eternal existence assured to us by our Master. Since Christ is greater than death we know all life is His, both on this side of the grave as well as beyond. Therefore we can assure our hearts with the truth contained in His own words, "I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Then, since Christ could call Lazarus back from death, it makes it clear that in the next life we shall be in close communion with our Lord and Master. This is already implied in the fact of eternal life and in the truth that Christ is greater than death, but the act of Christ in calling Lazarus from the tomb places this truth beyond doubt. We know that beyond the grave we shall be with Christ just as He is with us in this world, the difference being that when we pass from this world we shall see Him more clearly when the veil of sense is taken away. It is this which tempers our sorrow for the loved ones who have been taken from us, because we know that they are "at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 8), and it is this which makes the faithful follower of Christ look forward in hope to the day when he will meet his Master face to face.

St. John
x. 40-42;
xi. 1-45.

Light
on the
hereafter.

Moreover, it is worthy of careful consideration

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St. John x. 40-42; xi. 1-45. that the very narrative, which proclaims the omnipotence of Christ by His mastery over death, should also show in the most striking way His humanity and His sympathy for humanity. For here, in the midst of the narrative which tells of Christ's power to give life to the dead, we find the record of the way in which He sheds tears in sympathy for the sorrows of His friends. This conjunction of omnipotence and humanity should be of the greatest comfort to all of us. Our Master is the eternal life-giving God, but He is also the personal sympathising Friend Who feels with us in our sorrows. Therefore we look to One Who is not only the omnipotent God, but Who is also One Who knows our troubles and shares our griefs.

PRAYERS

O Eternal Father, the Author and Giver of life, Who didst send Thy only-begotten Son to be for us the Way, the Truth, and the Life: We thank Thee for the knowledge that there is Life for all who put their trust in Christ, we praise Thee for the assurance that in Him we have Life everlasting, and we rejoice that He is mightier than death: We pray Thee by Thy Holy Spirit to keep us close to our Lord and Master in this life, so that with Him we may at length pass through the gate of death into the joys of Thine everlasting Kingdom: We ask it for the glory of Thy Name. *Amen.*

Almighty God, before Whom stand the living and the dead, we thank Thee for all our loved ones whose faces we see no more, but whose love is with us for ever: We pray that we may ever think of them as with Thee, that we may realise that they are in Thy nearer Presence in Thy heavenly dwelling, and that they have entered upon the fulness of

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life in glory. Lift us by Thy grace into purer light and greater love for Thee here, so that when this life is ended we shall have our portion in eternal joy with all those who have trusted in Thee. We ask it for Thy Name's sake.

Amen.—(T. W. G.)

VII

THE SUPPER AT BETHANY

But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, *named* Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all. Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.

And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand; and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew *it*, that they might take him.

Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, which

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should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always. Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death: Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.—ST. JOHN XI. 46-57; XII. 1-11.

ONE of the striking things about the miracle of the Raising of Lazarus was the contrast between the divine power of Christ in bringing Lazarus back to life, and the humanity of Christ Whose tears mingled with those of His friends in sympathy for the sorrow which death brings. A further striking contrast, however, is seen in the fact that the very miracle which proclaimed Christ's omnipotence and His power over death was also the means of hastening Him to Calvary.

We are told in xi. 45 that the restoration of Lazarus to life had been the means of bringing many of the Jerusalem Jews to believe in Christ, but the next verse goes on to say that some of the Jews went to the Pharisees to tell them what had been done. It is quite probable that these Jews had been so roused by the miracle, that all their previous ideas about our Lord had been swept away; they therefore hastened to the Pharisees to put the truth before them, for they needed guidance from their religious leaders how they should act in the face of the marvellous event they had just witnessed.

St. John
xi. 46-57;
xii. 1-11.
St. John
xi. 46-57.

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St. John The receipt of the news had a different result than
xi. 46-57; that expected by those who had just come from
xii. I-II. Bethany, for it resulted in the hasty calling of a
Effect meeting of the Sanhedrin by the chief priests and
upon the Pharisees to concert measures to destroy Christ.
Jews of the That they should act in this way was not altogether
raising of surprising. The chief priests all belonged to the
Lazarus. sect of the Sadducees, who disbelieved in the possi-
bility of a resurrection (cf. St. Luke xx. 27; Acts
xxiii. 8). The report of the raising of Lazarus there-
fore was utterly discounted by them since it went
against their preconceived ideas, and the miracle
seems to have had the effect of rousing their hostility
just in the same way that the resurrection of our
Lord did later on (Acts iv. 1, 2; v. 17). The same
result was seen in the case of the Pharisees. Their
minds had long been closed against Christ, they were
still self-blinded (ix. 39-41), and they were still in
the condition which made them declare that our
Lord's statements about His unity with the Father
were simply blasphemous (x. 33). Hence the
marvellous story of the raising of Lazarus from the
dead had no effect in altering their minds about
Christ. The only effect which the miracle had upon
both Pharisees and chief priests was to make them
fear that the influence of our Lord might increase
among the people, and that the people might follow
Him rather than themselves. They admit that
"this man doeth many miracles," but they are not
inclined in favour of Christ even by such an admission.
Their one fear is that if they do not take energetic
measures against Him they will probably lose their

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own position of authority in Palestine. Any strong popular movement in favour of Christ was bound to be attended by a certain amount of disorder, and if the popular Jewish hopes of the Messiah should be roused in favour of Him, then some sort of tumult would be inevitable. Their Roman over-lords, however, would countenance no disorder in the countries under their sway, and any popular movement in favour of Christ would lead inevitably to the displacement of the chief priests and Pharisees, and to the deprivation of most of the religious privileges accorded to the Jews. It was in the midst of the discussion, how to avert this disaster to themselves and to the nation, that Caiaphas uttered the statement "that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." It seemed to him fairly obvious that it was essential to remove Christ by death rather than that the whole Jewish nation should lose its national status. "Better one man die, than the community perish," ran the Jewish saying, and so when the alternative was "Christ or the nation," there was only one answer possible for Caiaphas. But if he thus urged that our Lord should die to prevent the whole nation perishing, there was a truth in his prediction of which he never dreamed. The death of Christ was not simply going to save the political status of the Jews in the eyes of their Roman masters, as Caiaphas hoped, but it was going to be an atonement for the whole human race. It was this which made St. John declare that Caiaphas "being high priest that (fateful) year

St. John
xi. 46-57;
xii. 1-11.

Caiaphas.

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St. John prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation :
xi. 46-57 ; and not for that nation only, but that also He should
xii. 1-11. gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." The high priest had been the medium through whom the commands of God had been usually given (cf. Exod. xxviii. 30 ; Num. xxvii. 21), and his statement about the death of our Lord was a prophecy of a great truth, even though uttered by him in a sense different from the actual purposes of God. Just as Pilate in the title that he wrote over the Cross (xix. 19), or the chief priests in their mocking cries when Christ hung on Calvary (St. Mark xv. 31), were unconsciously testifying to great truths, so it was here. Caiaphas gave a testimony quite foreign to his own meaning, and his testimony was a prediction that the atoning death of Christ would bring into one fold all the children of God now scattered abroad.

A testimony
and a
prediction.

Urged on, therefore, by the warning advice of the High Priest, the Jewish Council now deliberately set themselves to bring about the death of Christ which they had been contemplating for so long. The immediate result was that our Lord gave up His work in the public centres. His " hour " was not yet come, and it was not His purpose to allow Himself to be taken prisoner just yet. Therefore He withdrew with His disciples into the wilderness country north-east of Jerusalem, and remained for a time at Ephraim, which was about fourteen miles from the capital. Whilst He remained here, no doubt teaching the disciples and any others who came to Him, the Feast of the Passover drew near,

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and in accordance with the prescribed custom (2 Chron. xxx. 17-19; Acts xxi. 24) many of the Jews went up to Jerusalem to purify themselves. Since these Jews were "from the country" they were not obsessed with the prejudices prevailing in Jerusalem, and on their arrival they sought for Christ in the Temple and speculated whether He was coming to the Feast. Probably they had recollections of hearing Christ's words at the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. ch. vii.) and were hoping to hear Him again. But if the expectation of faith was there with these "country people," the sinister hand of the chief priests and Pharisees was also there, for the Jewish leaders had now given orders that if anyone knew where Christ was they should report His whereabouts to the authorities, so that they might seize Him.

Such was the highly charged atmosphere of Jerusalem when our Lord set His face towards it for the last time. He left Ephraim, and journeying by way of Jericho (cf. St. Luke xviii. 35) joined some of the Galilean pilgrims who were going up to the Feast. Before He reached the capital, however, He turned aside at Bethany, and took up His abode with His friend Lazarus. The attitude of the inhabitants of Bethany towards Christ contrasts very favourably with that of the people of Jerusalem. They had welcomed Him as a Teacher and listened to His revelation of the truth of God (cf. St. Luke x. 38, 39), and they had seen Him as the Deliverer from death, wielding the powers of God (ch. xi.). In view of their past experiences it is not surprising that they

St. John
xi. 46-57;
xii. 1-11.

St. John
xii. 1-11.

Jesus
welcomed
at Bethany.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John gave our Lord a warm welcome when He visited **xi. 46-57**; Bethany again. Part of the welcome consisted in **xii. I-II.** entertaining Him at a public supper, and this evidently took place in the house of Simon, the one-time leper (cf. St. Matt. xxvi. 6), since Lazarus was not the host, but merely one of the guests (v. 2).

While the supper was in progress, an incident took place which struck the imagination of St. John, and which also called forth from our Lord a striking declaration of gratitude (St. Matt. xxvi. 13). Martha in her usual practical way was taking an active part in ministering to the needs of the guests. Mary, on the other hand, had other thoughts in mind. It is quite possible that she had secured a large amount of precious ointment on the death of Lazarus, and that it had not been used because of her faith that Christ would restore her brother (cf. xi. 39). Or it may simply have been that she had a store of precious ointment, since Jewish women were fond of perfumes. At all events, during the supper Mary came forward, and using "a pound of ointment of spikenard, very precious," she anointed our Lord's head and feet, and wiped His feet with her hair. St. John does not mention the anointing of the head, which was an ordinary mark of courtesy (cf. St. Luke vii. 46). What impresses him is the anointing of the feet, which was an act of the greatest veneration as well as of humility.

**Mary
anoints
the Lord.**

**Judas
Iscaiot.**

This act of devotion did not go unchallenged, however. The voice of criticism came from Judas Iscaiot, who disliked seeing ointment, costing a year's wages for a working man, used in this way.

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Even some of the disciples joined in the same cry of **St. John** indignation and echoed the strictures of Judas (**St. xi. 46-57;** Mark xiv. 4). But though Judas used the plausible **xii. 1-11.** excuse of the need of the poor in justification for his criticism, St. John probed the real motive. It was "not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." Judas had charge of the "bag" or "box" in which the money of the disciples was kept, and he evidently abused his trust, though his peculations were not then known to the other disciples. The latter still regarded him as a trusted man of business, and one, moreover, who would be judicious in distributing their alms to the poor (cf. xiii. 29), and it was for this reason that they were led away by Judas' plea on behalf of the poor, as St. Mark's account tells us.

Our Lord, with His knowledge of the motives **Jesus** which prompted Mary's act, rebuked the disciples **defends** for their criticism, which had completely missed the **Mary.** spirit of devotion underlying that act. He saw further than the superficial view which the disciples had taken, for He declared, "against the day of My burying hath she kept this." From our Lord's statement it seems that Mary had divined that the death of her Master was drawing near, and that the anointing was an act of sorrow for His impending decease, and an act of faith in Him in spite of that approaching event. No ordinary deed would have called forth Christ's statement that "Where-soever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath

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St. John done, be told for a memorial of her" (St. Matt. **xi. 46-57**; xxvi. 13). He holds up the action of Mary as one **xii. 1-11.** which will ever be told while the world lasts, and the reason for so doing seems to be at least twofold. In the first place, Mary showed a unique spirit of devotion to the Person of Christ, and a spirit which learned to love and to be faithful in spite of all difficulties. Up to the present moment the general body of the disciples do not seem to have realised that their Master was about to yield Himself to the death of the Cross, but Mary had evidently realised this fact, and yet still retained her faith in Christ. Moreover, when our Lord in unmistakable terms warned them all a little later on of His impending death and of their own coming defection in consequence, we know how they vehemently denied the possibility of their unfaithfulness. And yet when the testing time came "they all forsook Him and fled," and Peter added to the shame by the open denial of his Master. It is not surprising, therefore, that they were not found near the Cross when our Lord was hanging on Calvary, since they had not squarely faced the fact that the Cross was Christ's way of redemption. But it is not surprising, on the other hand, that Mary was to be found at the foot of the Cross later on with the other women, for the simple reason that she had accepted our Lord's teaching about the coming Cross. In spite of the difficulty of understanding why He, Who had the power to raise her brother from the dead, should allow Himself to die, she trusted Christ and kept her faith in Him. Some may try to find the reason

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for this in the fact that Mary had a deeper insight **St. John xi. 46-57;** than others into spiritual realities, and this may be **xii. 1-11.** so. But the broad simple truth is that she had a complete trust in Christ, and she was prepared to trust Him in spite of all difficulties.

Then Mary's action also revealed the spirit of self-sacrificing love. Superficially it seemed an act of waste to pour out so valuable an ointment over our Lord, but it was the expression of her own feelings for the Master Who had both taught her the truths of God and shown Himself the Conqueror of death. This spirit of self-sacrifice on the part of Mary was shown in more ways than one. When our Lord was rebuking the disciples for their criticism of Mary, He said, "She hath done what she could" (St. Mark xiv. 8), and the remark seems to imply that she had given her all in giving the ointment. Evidently all her savings had gone in the purchase of the spikenard with which she anointed her Master. Moreover, it was regarded by the Jews as a disgraceful thing for a woman to appear in public with her hair hanging. But no such thought prevented Mary from letting down her tresses with which she wiped the feet of Christ. No act was too humiliating to show her devotion, just as no act was too costly to testify her regard for our Lord. The spirit of self-sacrificing love surrounds Mary of Bethany.

Thus we find the spirit of hatred and of love, of unbelief and of belief, running throughout these verses, and we see the same thing in the last three verses. Many people came to Bethany to hear

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St. John Christ and also to see Lazarus. As was to be xi. 46-57; imagined, many Jews believed on Christ when they xii. 1-11. saw Lazarus and heard the story of how Christ raised him from the dead. This, however, only made the chief priests determine to put Lazarus to death as well as Christ; the rising spirit of hatred was not going to stop short with Christ, but would overwhelm those also who led men to believe in Jesus of Nazareth.

Three
types of
character.

Our meditations on this section therefore travel over three types of people. There are first of all the Jewish leaders with their developed sense of hatred, now bent on hastening Christ to death. They hate Him because His life and words are a challenge to themselves personally, and a challenge to their position in the Jewish world. Then we see the figure of Judas Iscariot, with the canker of money-worship eating away his loyalty to Christ, and slipping down the slope which is to end in betrayal. But in the foreground is the devoted figure of Mary, who asks for nothing but an opportunity to show her devotion to her Lord; she questions nothing, but is ready to trust herself to the Master even when the shadow of the Cross is before her.

It can readily be seen where the lesson lies for the Christian to-day. Personal devotion to our living Lord is His demand upon us: trust in Him that we may know all His promises, trust in Him for the realisation and understanding of all His teaching, and trust in Him that He may read the workings of our mind and the motives of our actions. If we have already experienced for ourselves anything of

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what His atoning love means for mankind we shall be able to trust Him for all else, just as Mary did. One thing she knew, she had realised the love of Christ for her brother and herself and she had witnessed His power over death, and because of this her faith never faltered even when the shadow of Calvary appeared. So it is for ourselves. Once we have tasted and seen "how gracious the Lord is" we can trust all else to His loving direction, for in so doing we shall earn His blessing as Mary did.

St. John
xi. 46-57;
xii. 1-11.

PRAYER

O God, Who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding; Pour into our hearts such love toward Thee, that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire: through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*
—(*Book of Common Prayer.*)

VIII

“HOSANNA!”

On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna : Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon ; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion : behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. These things understood not his disciples at the first : but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and *that* they had done these things unto him. The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing ? behold, the world is gone after him.

And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast : The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew : and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.

And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it ; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me ; and where I am, there shall also my servant be : if any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour. Now is my soul troubled : and what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour : but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard *it*, said that it thundered : others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said,

“Hosanna !”

This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world : now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die. The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever : and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up ? who is this Son of man ? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you : for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him : That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report ? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart ; that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with *their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him : but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue : For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light unto the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not : for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him : the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself ; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting : whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.—
ST. JOHN XII. 12-50.

SOME of the profoundest teaching of our Lord was St. John given by Him in private (cf. ch. iii.), but St. John xii. shows us that much of it was also called forth at 12-50.

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St. John xii. 12-50. the great national feasts. We shall see in this section that it was at the last great festival our Lord attended that He put before the Jews some of the greatest truths.

Expectation and excitement at Jerusalem.

The recent events at Bethany in connection with the raising of Lazarus had roused tremendous expectations amongst the people, and the crowds which had flocked to Jerusalem for the Feast were naturally raised to a great pitch of excitement (*vv.* 9, 17, 18). In Jerusalem itself there was a rising tide of commotion owing to the news of the raising of Lazarus, and among the crowds which had flocked to the Feast there was evidently the greatest stir. The same thing, moreover, was happening at Bethany. Many of the pilgrims who were journeying to Jerusalem for the Feast (*cf.* xi. 55) turned aside to see Christ, who could raise the dead, and to see Lazarus, to whom life had been restored. Some of these pilgrims went on afterwards to Jerusalem to spread the story, whilst others of them remained in Bethany to wait for further possible manifestations of power from Christ.

On the Sunday of Passion Week our Lord set out to keep His last Passover at Jerusalem. His journey, however, was not this time in private because many of the pilgrims waiting in Bethany set out with Him. The news of His coming quickly spread to Jerusalem, and the excited crowds in the capital could not contain themselves in patience when they heard of it. Both the Jews of Jerusalem (*vv.* 9-11) and the pilgrims already in the city (*v.* 12) hurried out in tumultuous excitement to meet our Lord.

“Hosanna !”

Their feelings were wholly favourable to Christ, for **St. John** they had the desire to acclaim Him as their King **xii.** and long-expected Messiah. It was with this in **12-50.** mind that they went prepared to give Him a Royal reception, for they took branches of the palm trees that grew on the road between Jerusalem and Bethany, and hurried to give Christ a joyful greeting, and one suitable for a king (Lev. xxiii. 40; Rev. vii. 9; 1 Macc. xiii. 51). The command of the chief priests and the Pharisees to betray Christ to them (xi. 57) was swept on one side. In defiance of the wishes of the authorities, group after group of pilgrims and of Jerusalem Jews went forth to meet Him with words that showed they were giving Him the honour due to the Messiah (cf. Ps. cxviii. 25, 26).

This general acclamation of our Lord as the Messiah was very striking in view of the antipathy shown to Him so recently (xi. 54), and it is significant, moreover, that Christ here accepted the honour rendered to Him. In this our Lord was acting very differently from what He had done on a former occasion. After the feeding of the five thousand Christ refused to give the slightest support to the proposal of the Jews to make Him a king, for the proposal was based merely upon material hopes and nothing more (vi. 15). In the present case, however, it seems that the Jews had in some degree really gauged the significance of our Lord's words and “signs,” and in some sense they were realising that He was the long-expected Messiah. Our Lord therefore responded to their faith, such as it was, for He

Christ
accepts the
homage.

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St. John took the ass provided for Him (cf. St. Matt. xxi. 2, 3) and rode on in lowly state to fulfil the prophecy which depicted the Messiah as a king of peace (Zech. ix. 9). And as He thus moved on towards Jerusalem it seemed for the moment as though the nation had at length turned to Christ, for unsophisticated Galilean pilgrims and conservative-minded Jews from the capital joined to acclaim the Messiah Who came in lowly triumph to the city of His people.

“ Sir, we
would see
Jesus.”

The Triumphal Procession of Christ to Jerusalem was a great outward triumph for our Lord, and within the city itself another incident took place which foreshadowed greater things still. This was the desire of certain Greeks to meet Christ. These Greeks were evidently men who had embraced the Jewish faith, and in their desire to see Christ they quite naturally sought the help of Philip, whose Greek name presupposed some contact with the larger world outside the Jews. With his usual caution (cf. vi. 7; xiv. 8, 9) Philip mentions the matter to Andrew, his fellow-townsmen, and together they introduce the Greeks to Christ.

What the motive of the Greeks was in seeking this interview it is difficult to say. It may have been that they wished to ask our Lord to go to their kinsmen outside of Palestine, for the formality of the method of introduction indicates that their desire was a friendly one. Their request thus seemed to complete the triumph of Christ. His own people had received Him, for even the people of Jerusalem had acclaimed Him. Now in the visit of

“Hosanna !”

the Greeks there seemed the promise of His wider dominion over the Gentile world also. St. John
xii.

Our Lord, however, had a very true estimate of the position which seemed to be opening out before Him. He knew full well that the triumphal greetings of the Jews were not based upon anything very solid, just as He knew that the Greeks had not penetrated into the real essence of His teaching. Christ therefore explains to His hearers the way by which His world-wide dominion over Jew and Gentile is to be obtained, for He indicates that it is the Cross which is to be the means of His dominion over the world. Just as a corn of wheat by dying brings forth fruit a hundredfold, so the Son of Man is to be glorified in dying upon the Cross. 12-50.

The Way
of the
Cross.

Moreover, the way of the Cross was the way for the disciple as well as for the Master, for the disciple must follow along the same road of self-sacrifice if he is to be true to Christ. No doubt our Lord was focussing attention on something which was the exact opposite of Greek ideas of self-enjoyment and self-culture, but it was the opposite of all Jewish ideas as well as of those of the Greeks.

The pathway of self-sacrifice, however, is never an easy one, and our Lord was tempted to shrink from it. No man of normal mind looks for death or welcomes it, and certainly Christ in His perfect humanity had no morbid desire for death or for the suffering of crucifixion. The physical side of our Lord's suffering is never emphasised either in the Gospels or Epistles, but we get glimpses occasionally just to show us that Christ, willing as He

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St. John was to offer Himself on Calvary for the sins of men,
xii. nevertheless shrank from the indignity and pain of
12-50. it. So here is one of those supreme moments of
temptation when the thought of a world dominion
without the Cross was brought before Christ as a
possibility. The Jews were acclaiming Him, the
Greeks were seeking Him; was it possible that His
rule over men was coming without the Cross? Such
was probably the temptation put before Him. But
our Lord knew that the "hour" for which He had
come embraced the Cross, and He accepted it will-
ingly in the purpose of the Father, only asking that
the Father shall be glorified. And as our Lord thus
definitely surrenders Himself to the Cross as the will
of God for Him, the Father Himself speaks from
heaven, and the heavenly voice declares that the
Father is glorified and will be increasingly glorified
in the voluntary submission of Christ to the Cross.
The voice of the Father had been heard at our
Lord's baptism when Christ began His mission of
redemption (cf. St. Matt. iii. 13-17), and the same
voice is heard again when the work of redemption
is near completion, and when the Cross itself has
been completely accepted by Christ. The import-
ance of Calvary and the importance of Christ's
acceptance of it are thus wrapped up in this message
from heaven. Our Lord Himself knew this, for He
declared (*vv.* 30-33) that the Cross will be the defeat
of Satan, and the salvation of men. There is nothing
of sorrow for Christ in the Cross, for it will be His
own exaltation. He will be "lifted up" on Calvary,
it is true, but He will thus be "lifted up" to the

Verse 27.

**The
Father's
voice.**

“Hosanna!”

throne on high, and then will begin the defeat of **St. John**
the evil one and the triumph of the cause of Christ. **xii.**

It is not surprising that our Lord's hearers should **12-50.**
be nonplussed by His words. They had just hailed **Verse 34.**
Christ with tumultuous acclaim as their Messiah,
and evidently in imagination they had seen Him
ousting the Romans from Palestine, and re-estab-
lishing the kingdom for the Jews. But they cannot
understand how this is to be if Christ is to die, and
to die upon the Cross. How can the kingdom come
unless Christ remains with them? Their Law had
told them of a Messiah who was to abide for ever
(cf. Ps. lxxii. 5; lxxxix. 29), but how could His
throne be for ever (cf. Ps. xlv. 6) if Christ was to
be lifted up on the Cross?

Our Lord, just as in viii. 23, 24, apparently makes **Verses**
no direct reply to the mystified questioners, but His **34, 35.**
answer nevertheless goes effectively to the point.
He says in effect, “The light of the Son of God is
with you now, listen to Him, obey Him, before the
darkness of ignorance and of spiritual gloom extin-
guish the light. Believe now in the Son of God Who
has brought you this light, so that you come into
the relationship of those who are children of God
and who walk in the light given them by God” (cf.
1 John i. 7). It is a warning that persistent dis-
regard of the truth brings spiritual blindness, and a
warning that wilful disobedience to Christ's revela-
tions can only result in the darkness of a gloom that
can see and understand nothing of Christ's teaching.
On the other hand, it is an assurance that those who
accept the light of the truth which they learn from

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St. John xii. 12-50. Christ will come into the closest relationship with God. All questions about spiritual things, whether it be the relationship of the Messianic promises to our Lord (v. 34), whether it be the relationship of Christ to the Father, will be clear to those who walk in the light that Christ gives.

Responsibility of those who hear.

These words close the utterances of our Lord to the general public, for what comes in vv. 37-50 seems to be a comment and general summing-up on the part of St. John. It is therefore significant that this last public utterance of Christ should have emphasised so strongly the responsibility of those who hear His words. There is only a future of darkness for those who persistently disregard His message, but there is "light" and "fellowship with God" for those who hear Christ and obey Him.

Verses 37-41.

Of the truth he has just recorded St. John proceeds to give illustrations. In the first place the Jews, generally speaking, had turned from the truth offered by Christ. The evidence of the miracles or "signs" had been of no avail. They had persistently shut their eyes to the truth, and the time had come when in consequence they were unable to see and understand the truth, as Isaiah had prophesied (cf. Isa. vi. 10). When Isaiah declared that God "hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart and be converted," the prophet was stating the result of a very natural process. There is here a law of the physical and of the spiritual world. Constant disuse of an arm or

“Hosanna !”

leg would mean ultimately incapacity to use the **St. John**
limb. Constant disuse of the eye would mean **xii.**
blindness, and constant use of the eyes in darkness **12-50.**
would also mean blindness ultimately. It is the
same also in the spiritual world. Persistent refusal
to face truth and persistent denial of what is truth
bring incapacity to know what is truth. And
deliberate refusal to face spiritual realities means
sooner or later inability to know and understand
them. That way lies spiritual death, as Isaiah
plainly foretold.

Amongst the rulers there were some, however, **Verses**
who were fully alive to spiritual realities, and **42, 43.**
whose sense of truth made them know that
Christ was all He professed to be. The claim of
truth could not be gainsaid, and therefore they
believed in Him. So far as we can see, their belief
was genuine, and as complete as that of the dis-
ciples. But the fear of spiritual and social boycott
(cf. ix. 22) was more powerful than their belief in
Christ. They lacked the courage to confess Christ
before men, for they were thinking too much of
what might result from their confession, instead of
simply stating their belief in Christ and leaving the
future to Him. For men of this type there would
be no happiness in their knowledge of Christ, for
happiness only comes with full confession and full
surrender. Where there is a lack of confession,
however, there is first of all a sense of inward dis-
loyalty, and if confession is still delayed there is the
danger that the “fear of man” may crush out
the “fear of God.” Such would be the experience

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St. John of these Jewish rulers. The last state of such men
xii. would be worse than the first—worse because they
12-50. would have dropped the prize which they were
taking into their hands.

Verses It is with such practical illustrations before him
44-50. that St. John closes with a summary of Christ's
teaching which had been given so often before. In
Christ, he says, men see God, and belief in Christ
is therefore belief in God. The man who rejects
the words of Christ is laying up for himself judgment
by those words in the last day, but he who believes
in the words of Christ has light to guide him in this
world and will go on to the fuller light of "ever-
lasting life." The last word of Christ here, as always,
is not "condemnation" but the offer of "life ever-
lasting," and it is man's own fault if he meets
"judgment," and not the blessing of being wel-
comed into the kingdom of heaven.

The Such is the story of this last great day in the
lessons of public ministry of our Lord, and there are some
this great pertinent lessons to be drawn from it. One of the
day. great lessons is a warning against a superficial
acknowledgment of Christ. For example, there is
the superficial acknowledgment of Christ which
welcomes Him as a Social Reformer, an Ethical
Teacher and no more. There is also a recognition
of Christ which sees in Him the Son of God, but
only in the sense that all men may be "sons of God."
There is further an acknowledgment of Christ as the
Incarnate Son of God, but with no recognition of
Him as Crucified Redeemer. These and such-like

“Hosanna !”

bear some relation to the feelings of the Jews and St. John
Greeks who acclaimed Christ on Palm Sunday. xii.
Our Lord tells us, just as He told His hearers on 12-50.

Palm Sunday, that the centre of our faith is a crucified Saviour, the Son of God “Who died for our sins and rose again for our justification.” It is in the knowledge of Christ as Saviour that we know Him as the fulfilment of all our other hopes, whether those hopes be social and ethical, or whether they are centred in the desire for mystical union with God.

In the second place, we are warned of the dangers of a belief that is ashamed to confess Christ before men. It is not without significance St. Paul said, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus . . . thou shalt be saved” (Rom. x. 9). A man may believe in Christ in his heart, and such a belief may produce the fruit of righteousness (Rom. x. 10), but unless open confession of faith is made there is danger of the belief becoming atrophied. A secret and silent faith which shuns publicity for fear of man is not going to bring much happiness nor is such a faith likely to be long-enduring.

But if the first two lessons are those of warning, the third is of a very different kind, for the narrative assures us in no uncertain fashion of the blessings awaiting those whose faith is firmly fixed on Christ their Saviour, and who accept His words. Faith brings the realisation of His promises now, and makes sure to us all that is summed up in the truth of “everlasting life.” The “light” He gives on everything connected with God and with the truths

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St. John xii. 12-50. of spiritual life brings such a communion of God with the redeemed man that in very truth "everlasting life" begins now (1 John i. 3).

Walk in the light : so shalt thou know
That fellowship of love
His Spirit only can bestow,
Who reigns in light above.

Walk in the light : and sin, abhorred,
Shall ne'er defile again :
The Blood of Jesus Christ thy Lord
Shall cleanse from every stain.

Walk in the light : and thine shall be
A path, though thorny, bright;
For God, by grace, shall dwell in thee,
And God Himself is Light.

B. BARTON.

(Church Hymnal for the
Christian Year, No. 549.)

PRAYER

O Almighty God, Whom truly to know is everlasting life :
Grant us perfectly to know Thy Son Jesus Christ to be the
way, the truth and the life, that by faith and trust in Him
we may walk with Him in the way that means eternal life
both here and hereafter; Through the same Jesus Christ
our Lord. *Amen.*—(Adapted from the *Book of Common
Prayer.*)

IX

THE WASHING OF THE FEET

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God: He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe *them* with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash *his* feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for *so* I am. If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet: ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am *he*.

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Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some *of them* thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy *those things* that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.

Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou has denied me thrice.—ST. JOHN XIII. 1-38.

St. John
xiii.
1-38.

THE tumultuous scenes of Palm Sunday were the last occasion when our Lord took part in any public gathering. From now onward He drew aside with His disciples for intimate fellowship and intimate talk. In the private circle with His few faithful followers He was to reveal some of His innermost

The Washing of the Feet

thoughts, because chapters xiv to xvii contain **St. John** some of the most hallowed teaching of the Christian **xiii.** faith, and some of the most intimate and personal **1-38.** revelations which ever fell from the lips of Christ. It is the teaching which every earnest follower of Christ loves to read, and the teaching which it is the desire of every true Christian to experience for himself.

But, significantly enough, before our Lord unfolded His final message of love and affection to His own, there were certain important lessons which the disciples had still to learn. The Twelve were by no means fully alive to much of our Lord's teaching even yet. In spite of the constant intercourse with their Master, and in spite of the daily teaching by precept and example, they were still very far from a clear understanding of much of their Master's message. Their own limitations and Christ's efforts to enlighten them are here shown again.

The twelve disciples had come together with Christ to their usual meeting-place in Jerusalem, probably in the house of the mother of John Mark (cf. Acts xii. 12). They had obviously made their way there in view of the approaching Passover, for since neither our Lord nor any of the Twelve were householders in Jerusalem they would necessarily be glad of such hospitality as Mark's mother could give. It was during the preliminary ceremonies connected with the Passover that there occurred the extraordinary spectacle of Christ washing the feet of the Twelve.

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St. John
xiii.
1-38.

Rivalry
among the
disciples.

It is not clear how the occasion for this arose, because St. John gives no apparent reason for it. Possibly the disciples had arrived tired from their journey, and had found no servants to wait on them. Thereupon a dispute had evidently arisen concerning who should perform the office of feet-washing, a task usually performed by a slave (cf. St. Luke vii. 44); and not one of the disciples had volunteered to do it. There had always been a certain amount of rivalry and jealousy amongst the disciples, for there had been of late a struggle for precedence amongst them. This had been seen on the journey up to Jerusalem (St. Luke ix. 46-48), it had been revealed in a very marked manner in the request by James and John for priority in the Kingdom (St. Mark x. 35-45), and St. Luke tells us that the same spirit was manifest even at the Last Supper (xxii. 24-30). Since this was so, the most obvious explanation is that not one of the disciples would volunteer to perform the menial act of foot-washing, and that they thus sat down to supper without being cleansed.

Another possible explanation is that there was a dispute between the disciples who was to have the coveted place next to their Master at supper, and who should thus recline on the couch nearest to Christ, and so hear what the others might not. At all events there was evidently a spirit present which needed a very pointed lesson.

St. John introduces the incident with no sense of reproof, but rather with the idea of showing something of Christ's love for His disciples. The first thought of St. John is that Christ knew that the hour

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of His departure was at hand, but that even with St. John Christ's knowledge that the Cross was nigh His **xiii.** main consideration was for the disciples, *i.e.* "He **1-38.** loved them unto the end." The latter phrase is translated in the margin of the Revised Version as "He loved them to the uttermost." Both translations are possible, and each of them points ultimately to the same thing. "To the end" implies the love which persisted in spite of their petty strife for precedence, in spite of their desertion and denial, and which carried Him to Calvary for them. "To the uttermost," on the other hand, points to the love which endured the darkness of Gethsemane and the agony of the Cross, the love which set no limits to itself when the salvation of men was involved. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that Christ "is able to save to the uttermost" (vii. 25), and the expression implies full and complete salvation; but if the salvation is complete, the love which procured the complete salvation is itself unlimited. He "loved to the uttermost" to secure salvation "to the uttermost."

What, however, seems to have impressed St. John was not only the fact that Christ showed His love for His disciples in teaching them by washing their feet, but also that this act should have been done in the face of two supreme facts. First of all St. John records that the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot to betray our Lord, a fact of which He was already aware (v. 21). In the second place, St. John states that Christ had come from God and was going back to God, and that the Father

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St. John had given "all things" into His hands, and the
xiii. latter phrase means that Christ had the ordering
1-38. both of His own future as well as the future of the whole world. On the one hand Sin and Satan were personified in Judas Iscariot, and yet, on the other hand, the Eternal Son of the living God, in whom omnipotent power rested, could knowingly accept the fact of man's baseness and treachery, and in spite of it voluntarily demean Himself to perform the office of a slave for His disciples.

For this is what now took place. Christ rose from the couch where He was reclining, laid aside His outer robes, and stood before His disciples in the simple tunic in which alone slaves were dressed. He then began the menial task of washing the feet of each of His disciples. Since the disciples in their eagerness to secure pre-eminence could not stoop to do a necessary humble duty, then they should learn that their Master, the Eternal Son of God, would do it. By an ocular demonstration they were to learn that the way of service and self-sacrifice was their Master's way. Calvary was the climax of Christ's self-sacrifice, but the humble domestic service of washing the disciples' feet was part of the same way of life.

**Peter's
protest.**

The strangeness of the spectacle was apparent to all, but it was the impetuous Peter who as usual voiced the feelings of his fellows. He shrank from the thought of his Master performing a menial task for him, and his query, Lord dost Thou wash my feet? is the expression of a man who at all events was honest in not wishing to see his Master demean

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Himself before him. Even though Christ may tell **St. John** him that he will understand more clearly later on **xiii.** the significance of His action, yet in his honest **1-38.** impulsive fashion he refuses to give way when he cannot understand. Our Lord therefore rebuked **Verse 8.** him for his vehement self-assertion. Peter's motive was right in so far as he wished his Master not to act the part of a servant to him, but he was wrong in persisting when Christ would do what He had in mind. Hence the rebuke, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." Our Lord means to imply that unless Peter allows his Master to have His way with him, and unless he learns to understand the spirit of his Master in self-sacrifice, he could have no part or lot in Christ (cf. St. Matt. xvi. 22, 23).

At our Lord's reproach Peter, with his open honesty, rushes to the other extreme and declares, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." He will let Christ do anything and everything if He so wills. Our Lord, however, still keeping the same metaphor, gently says, "He that **A symbolic act.** is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (R.V.). The primary meaning is that guests, when invited to a feast, would bathe before setting out and would therefore only need to wash off the dust of the journey. But the secondary meaning is the important one both for Christ and for Peter. Our Lord meant that Peter and the disciples had been "bathed" by their discipleship, *i.e.* they had entered into a new spiritual relationship by their contact with Christ and by their belief in

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St. John Christ (cf. xv. 3). Such men were not yet perfect, **xiii.** they were still liable to sin, but the sins into which **1-38.** they fell would be like the dust that covered the traveller's feet, and could be cleansed by the forgiveness of the Master (cf. 1 John i. 7, 9).

Verses Thus our Lord taught a new lesson, viz. that the **12-17.** way of self-sacrifice is the true ideal for men. Sometimes men have thought they have followed Christ's teaching by literally washing the feet of people (v. 14). This has been done in the past by kings of England, just as it is done once a year by the Pope.

A lesson Such ceremonial and literal fulfilments in obedience **in self-** to the letter of Christ's words miss, however, the **sacrifice.** essential point of His teaching. The plain truth of our Lord's lesson is that all Christians are called upon in daily self-sacrifice to esteem others better than themselves. Such a lesson is by no means easy for us to learn, but in the learning of it men find the "blessedness" (v. 17) of which Christ speaks.

Verses By contrast with Christ's way which leads to **18-30.** "happiness" (v. 17), St. John records the way of Judas Iscariot, which leads to darkness (v. 30). The frequent references to the traitor show how St. John himself felt the contrast, and especially does he feel it that the climax should come at this point. So far as the actual betrayal is concerned it did not come without warning. After the discourse at Capernaum, when Simon Peter expressed the feelings of the disciples, he said, "we have believed and know that Thou art the Holy One of God." The answer of Christ was disconcerting in its statement, "Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you

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is a devil?" (vi. 69-71). Moreover, at the feast at St. John Bethany the significance of the intervention of **xiii.** Judas Iscariot is noted (xii. 4-6), and in the early **1-38.** stages of this supper St. John remarks on it again (xiii. 2, 11). The time had now come, however, for our Lord to let Judas go his own way, and He probably forced the matter forward at this stage to forewarn the disciples. He wanted them to know, so that when the trouble came they would realise that Christ had foretold it.

For the moment, sorrow for the treachery of Judas seemed to predominate in our Lord's mind. That a man who had eaten bread with Christ should violate the elementary laws of hospitality (cf. Ps. xli. 9) was the first note of grief (v. 18), and to this was added the poignant fact that one of His own disciples should be guilty of this base deed (v. 21). The feeling of intense grief for the treachery of Judas which had disquieted the spirit of Jesus conveyed itself also to the disciples, and we can imagine the feeling of concern with which the disciples regarded each other when their Master declared, "one of you shall betray Me." But the secret was not divulged to all the disciples. St. John had the post of honour next to our Lord at the supper, and he was reclining in such a way that his head came very near to Christ. Peter tried to get John to find out who the traitor was, but the question of John and the answer of Christ were probably not heard by any other disciple. When, therefore, in accordance with His whispered statement to John, our Lord gave the sop to Judas Iscariot and said, "That thou doest, do quickly,"

The grief
of Jesus
over Judas.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John
xiii.
1-38.

the only thought of the disciples was that Judas was being commissioned to do something of the type he usually did as keeper of their common purse.

This is not the place to go into the details of the life-story of Judas Iscariot. It is sufficient to say that his motives in joining the ranks of the disciples were probably as crude and as mixed as those of the rest of the disciples. Like them he had visions of an earthly kingdom and of material gains, but whereas the personal contact with Christ gradually eliminated the baser motives from the disciples, this was not so with Judas Iscariot. The canker of political hopes and the desire for personal gain clung to him in spite of Christ's influence, and the act of betrayal was the work of a man who crowned a life of self-seeking by a desperate act of treachery. That Christ tried to pull him back from his fatal course was unquestioned, the very giving of the sop at supper was a mark of special friendship, and as such it was the last appeal of Christ to Judas. But so far from the sop drawing him back, St. John says that Satan entered into him. Probably St. John saw the look of hatred and malignancy that was determined on treachery in spite of the proffered mark of friendship. And with the look of hatred Judas departs into the night; as St. John significantly points out, for it seemed to him that the blackness of the deed of treachery well fitted the darkness of the hour (cf. iii. 20).

Verses
31-35

Probably after the departure of Judas our Lord instituted the Lord's Supper. At all events, as soon as Judas had gone out the atmosphere changed,

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and our Lord began the intimate personal conversation which runs on through the next four chapters. St. John xiii.

But how very significant is the transition from the I-38.

treachery of Judas to Christ's song of triumph. Christ's cry of triumph.

"Now is the Son of man glorified," our Lord says when the traitor had gone out to lay his plans for delivering up his Master. The cry of triumph brings out the truth that in the death on Calvary Christ's glory came. It was only when treachery and hatred had done their worst and nailed Christ to the Cross, it was only when He had allowed the sin of men to send Him as "a lamb to the slaughter," that His glory began. The Cross was the Father's way of salvation for the world, and therefore when Christ saw Judas going out to hasten His death, He saw in it nothing of sorrow but of joy, for it was the beginning of glory for Himself, the glory of seeing the world beginning to be reconciled to God (cf. 2 Cor. v. 19).

The coming glory, however, could not come until Christ was separated from His disciples. He therefore turned to the eleven disciples and gently says, "Little children"—and the expression is one of winsome tenderness, and nowhere else used by Christ—"whither I go, ye cannot come." They would follow Him afterwards (v. 36), but He was to tread the way of Calvary alone, for they were not ready to follow their Master any more than the Jews were (vii. 34; viii. 21). The tenderness of Christ was carried on, moreover, in the new command He laid on them to "love one another: even as I loved you, that ye also may love one another" (R.V., "Love one another." margin). This is very significant. It is because of another."

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St. John Christ's love for the disciples that the disciples were
xiii. to love others; such was the lesson He impressed
1-38. upon them. And that lesson was learned and practised by the first Christians. "See how these Christians love one another" was the testimony of their heathen neighbours, for the first followers of Christ learned to have a brotherly feeling for all who served their Master. But the mutual esteem had its origin in the love of the Master Who taught His followers to love one another "even as I loved you." St. John himself let the lesson sink into his mind, and by word and example tried to carry it out. His first Epistle in particular shows how the message struck deep into his soul. He saw the love of God revealed in the voluntary self-sacrifice of Christ on Calvary for our sins, and in that, "son of thunder" though he had been, he found the motive power to love his fellows (cf. 1 John iv. 10-11).

Verses
36-38.

There was yet one lesson of warning before the incident closed. Whatever the disciples as a body may have been thinking, it is obvious that what had struck the mind of Peter was the fact that Christ was going where the disciples could not go. When our Lord further declared that Peter could not follow Him until afterwards, the intimation seemed a challenge to the impetuous disciple. He had been with Christ up the Mount of Transfiguration, he had stood with Him when He had raised the dead, he had walked on the sea to Him; there seemed no reason, therefore, why any peril should daunt Peter. Hence he burst out with the assertion that he would follow Christ even to death. But on the astonished

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ears of the disciples fell the prediction that the **St. John**
loud assertion of Peter was vain, and that in his **xiii.**
Master's hour of trial the disciple would be found **I-38.**
wanting.

Is there any significance in the fact that Peter did **The**
not speak to Christ again from this moment until **silence of**
Christ sought him out after the Resurrection (1 Cor. **Peter.**
xv. 5)? Other disciples like Thomas, Philip and
Jude came forward with their questions (xiv. 5, 8, 22),
but not so Peter. The usually impetuous man seems
either to have been grieved with the thought that
Christ could predict cowardice for him, or he was
silent knowing that even yet the Cross was not in
his calculations. The latter was probably the true
reason. Had he really believed that the way of
Calvary was the right way he would probably not
have failed when the testing time came. But the
Cross was never in his scheme for bringing in the
kingdom, for he had deliberately attempted to turn
Christ away from it (St. Matt. xvi. 22). Since this
was the case, it was inevitable that he should fail
when the hour of trial came.

So the chapter ends practically as it begins. The
first section had taught the whole body of disciples
that self-sacrifice was Christ's way. The second
part revealed the appalling result for one who in
selfishness had revolted against the way of self-
sacrifice. The last few verses give their note of
warning to the man who, as leader of the disciples,
was not prepared even yet for the supreme sacrifice
of Calvary.

The lesson for us lies in the words of verse 17,

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St. John
xiii.

1-38.

Knowing
and doing.

i.e. "If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them" (R.V.).

If there is one thing we need it is a knowledge of the spirit of our Master. His spirit spelled self-sacrifice, it spelled Calvary. When we "know" Him as the Saviour of men then we learn something of His self-sacrificing love for us. The love of Christ, in its breadth and length and height and depth, passeth knowledge, as St. Paul truly says (Eph. iii. 18, 19), but the love is measured out to us by Calvary and by all that Calvary implies. When we "know" this great truth for ourselves, then we learn to love Him (1 John iv. 19).

But it is because of our knowledge of His love to us that we feel constrained to show love to our fellows. Here lies the only true and permanent motive for Christian action. All our preaching and teaching, all our social and philanthropic work, all our intercourse with each other can only be right if it is inspired and guided by the compelling love of Christ for ourselves.

It is this way that we find the "blessedness" or the "happiness." In the knowledge of the love of God for sinful humanity, a love which constrained Christ to endure suffering and death—in that knowledge we first of all draw near to Christ as forgiven sinners, loving Him because He loved us so much.

Then as we live near to Him we catch His spirit, we love with something of His love, for we try to see our fellows as He sees them, and we learn to love them as our Master loves them.

Thus united with Christ in spirit, living out our

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lives on the lines He directs, we learn by experience **St. John**
the joy of a Christ-directed life. It is this way that **xiii.**
Christian happiness is to be found. **i-38.**

PRAYER

Blessed Lord, Who for our sakes wast content to bear sorrow, and want and death, grant unto us such a measure of Thy Spirit that we may follow Thee in all self-denial and tenderness of soul. Help us by Thy great love to succour the afflicted, to relieve the needy and destitute, to share the burdens of the heavy-laden, and ever to see Thee in all who are poor and desolate. *Amen.*—(BISHOP WESTCOTT.)

X

PARTING PROMISES

Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions : if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest ; and how can we know the way ? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also : and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip ? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father ; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father ? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself : but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I *am* in the Father, and the Father in me : or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and greater *works* than these shall he do ; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do *it*.

If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ; *Even* the Spirit of truth ; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him : but ye know him ; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless : I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more ; but ye see me : because I live, ye shall live also. And that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He

Parting Promises

that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me : and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words : and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings : and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being *yet* present with you. But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come *again* unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father : for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you : for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.—ST. JOHN XIV. 1-31.

THE division of the Bible into chapters is sometimes St. John a little arbitrary because it tends occasionally to **xiv.** obscure the connection between one chapter and **I-31.** the next. Thus there is no division in reality between what is recorded in chapters xiii and xiv. The disciples had been saddened by certain events in the Upper Room. John at least knew that the Betrayer had departed on his errand of treachery ; all of them had heard the prediction of Peter's denial ; whilst they were all aware that their Master was about to leave them, and that they could not follow Him. Consequently there was a feeling of apprehension and of bewilderment amongst them.

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St. John
xiv.

I-31.

Verses 1-4.

“Let not
your heart
be
troubled.”

Our Lord therefore turns to comfort His disciples. He bids them not to be troubled at what He had said about His going away, for He assures them that His departure does not mean they are going to lose Him for ever. In the future they are going to be reunited to Him. The familiar words of verses 2 and 3 are full of the greatest assurance. The first phrase, “In My Father’s house are many mansions,” is capable of more than one interpretation. The subsidiary idea is that God is the Ruler of the Universe, and that there are in it many “abiding places” for men. The disciples had just had the experience of one “abiding place.” They had been in the company of Christ, and in their three years’ intercourse they had learned much about God and about His will for men. There would be another “abiding place” for them after Pentecost, when they would be influenced and empowered by the Spirit of God in making Him known, and another “abiding place” still awaited them when they passed from this world to the glory of heaven.

The main idea of the phrase, however, is more familiar. Our Lord is thinking primarily of Heaven, and He tells His disciples that He is going away to prepare a place for them in the Father’s House. He likens Himself to a messenger going to secure quarters for His guests, an idea which the Epistle to the Hebrews emphasises by speaking of Heaven “whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus” (vi. 20). And in the Father’s heavenly home He is to meet His disciples again.

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Now the true idea of Heaven lies in this statement of our Lord. There is nothing vague and intangible in the idea, for it is summed up in the fact that Heaven is the place where we shall be with Christ. "I go to prepare a place for you," "I will receive you unto Myself," "where I am, there ye may be also"—such are the Master's own statements to His followers. It is the same hope held out to the dying thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me . . ." (St. Luke xxiii. 43). In that hope the Apostles rested. To St. Paul Heaven was "to be with Christ" (Philipp. i. 23), or, more beautifully still, "to be at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 8, R.V.). This is the glorious and assured hope of the Christian, that our loved ones who have gone from us are now with the Master they served on earth. They see His face and they serve Him in Heaven as they used to do upon earth (Rev. xxii. 3, 4).

St. John
xiv.
1-31.
What
Heaven is.

To us the fact that in Christ we find God and Heaven is part of the faith by which we live, but it was not so evident to those who heard the words of our Lord in the Upper Room. The doubts and the difficulties of the disciples on the subject are wrapped up in the questions which three of them now put to our Lord. The first query came from Thomas. It was characteristic of this disciple that he should always see difficulties (xi. 16), and that he should want clear evidence about things (xx. 24, 25). He was a realist, a man rather typical of English people, who prefer plain facts to theories. So when Christ says, "Whither I go, ye know the way" (R.V.), Thomas wants more explanation. The matter is

Verses 5-7.

The Way.

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St. John too vital to allow any misunderstanding, and since
xiv. he does not understand, he confesses his ignorance
1-31. of Christ's destination and also of the way to it. Our Lord therefore replies, "I am the way, the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

In this reply of Christ there is a summing-up of the central fact of the Christian faith. A little later, whilst still in the Upper Room, our Lord said that Eternal Life is to know the Father and Jesus Christ Who had been sent by Him (xvii. 3), and this is undoubtedly the great truth which St. John emphasises throughout the Gospel (cf. i. 18). It is the same truth upon which St. Paul fastens when he says that Christ is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. i. 15), and that through Christ we have access unto the Father (Eph. ii. 18). The Epistle to the Hebrews brings out the same point when it says that we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way . . . through . . . His flesh" (x. 19, 20).

It is not surprising, therefore, that Christianity in its first days was called "the way" (cf. Acts ix. 2; xix. 9, 23; xxii. 4; xxiv. 22). The implication of the expression was that the Christians had learned a new manner of life, for it was this which impressed itself on the non-Christian world. The expression, moreover, implied in addition that the Christians had learned God's truth, and that they had entered on a new and eternal life. They had seen the invisible God in the visible Christ, and because of what they had learned from Him they had started on the way

Parting Promises

which would land them one day in the nearer Presence of God, and bring them to be "at home" with their Lord and Master.

St. John
xiv.
1-31.

Such was the plain teaching of Christ, and such the disciples realised for themselves. Sometimes men have wondered whether our Lord's statement has ruled out the possibility of men knowing God apart from Christ. In answer it may be said that men have certainly learned something of God even apart from Christ. The world of nature and the conscience of men have both been agents to bring people near to God. Men have given expression to many truths about God which they have learned elsewhere than through Christ. The highest minds of ancient Greece, for example, did so. But nowhere, not even in the Old Testament, did men know God as Father until they learned it from the lips of Jesus. To-day the veriest infant lisps his words of prayer to God as Father, but that simple yet profound truth comes to us only through Christ, Who taught it to His disciples.

That truth, so apparent to us now, was not, however, readily grasped by the disciples. As Jews they were reared in thoughts of the holiness and majesty of God, and the tenderness of the thought of God as Father did not come quickly to them. Hence the practical-minded Philip (cf. vi. 7) asks for an explicit demonstration of the Father. He wanted a direct vision of God, and like his forefathers he wished for an open view of the Eternal Father of Whom Christ spoke (cf. Ex. xxiv. 10 : xxxiii. 18).

The request was evidently a disappointment to

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John Christ. Philip had been one of the first disciples
xiv. (i. 43), and the repeated teaching of our Lord does
1-31. not seem to have been grasped by him. Christ
therefore reminds Philip of what He had said before.
He declares that He reveals the Father in His own
Person (cf. xii. 45), and that He speaks the words
and does the works of the Father (cf. v. 36; x. 37).
Hence the very evidence of what He says and does
should convince Philip that the Father is One with
Christ, and Christ One with the Father (cf. x. 38).

“Greater
things than
these.”

Moreover, He adds that in the near future there
will be for the disciples certain tangible evidences of
the truth of what He says. He has already shown
His Oneness with the Father by His previous
works, but greater works even than Christ had done
were to be performed by the disciples after their
Master had ascended to the Father. This statement
is an extraordinary one, and must have seemed
utterly incredible to those who heard it. But our
Lord's promise was emphatic. When He was
exalted to the right hand of the Father and was
wielding the power of God, then the power which
He, in His Incarnate Form, had been exercising in
Galilee would be used by the disciples themselves.
“For I will work in you with the power which I
shall have at the Father's right hand”—such is the
way in which Luther paraphrases this truth.

This became a great reality after Pentecost. The
disciples healed the sick (Acts v. 15; ix. 17, 18),
cast out devils (xvi. 18), raised the dead (ix. 41;
xx. 10)—these were works such as our Lord Himself
had done. But the “greater works” were the

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spiritual miracles accomplished in Jerusalem and St. John elsewhere. There were only 120 Christians in **xiv.**

Jerusalem at the Ascension (Acts i. 15), but several **1-31.**

thousands were added on the Day of Pentecost and soon after (Acts ii. 41; iv. 4). Within a few years,

moreover, through the agency of St. Paul and others,

the Gospel was carried throughout the greater part of the then known world. But it is very significant **The Holy Spirit's work.**

that every forward movement in proclaiming the

Gospel to the Gentile world was instigated and carried

forward through the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy

Spirit, working through the followers of Christ,

who brought about the expansion of the Christian

community which our Lord had started. And the

Apostles then realised what their Master declared

in the Upper Room, that all these things happened

"because I go unto the Father" (cf. Acts ii. 33).

The essential reason for the power exercised by the disciples is that their Master after the Ascension was wielding the power of God, and making that power efficacious for mankind through the action of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. But it should be noted that all these "greater works" to which our Lord referred were to be done in answer to the prayers of the disciples, prayed in the "name" of Christ. This implies that such prayers are not a matter for the Christian only, but they concern our Lord as well, and since this is the case, such prayers are bound to be answered "that the Father may be glorified in the Son." In this lies the strength of Christians, and in this also is found the reason for the progress of Christianity, for both are the inevit-

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St. John able outcome of the response of the Father and Son
xiv. to the unity of spirit between the Christian and
I-31. Christ.

Verses Whilst prayer in the name of Christ unites the
15-17. Christian and his Master in furthering the work of

The Whilst prayer in the name of Christ unites the
Paraclete. Christian and his Master in furthering the work of
Christ, our Lord also makes a specific promise of
personal help to His followers by telling them of
the Comforter He is going to send. The word
Comforter is literally Paraclete, and means one
“called to the side” of anyone. Sometimes it is
translated Advocate, but it has not our modern sense
of one who pleads before a judge (cf. 1 John ii. 1).
It rather implies One Who represents Christ to men
and One Who in Christ’s stead journeys with us in
place of our ascended Lord.

One version of verse 17 makes our Lord say of
the Holy Spirit “ye know Him, for He abideth with
you and is in you.” This seems to say that the
disciples by their knowledge of Christ already knew
the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit was already
theirs. To us such a fact seems a self-evident truth,
because when men know and love Christ it is a
plain sign that they are influenced by the Holy
Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. xii. 3; 1 John iii. 24). During
our Lord’s earthly life, however, the disciples were
not fully conscious of the Divinity of Christ. When
this knowledge came to them in its fullness after the
Resurrection, then their possession by the Holy
Spirit became a very different thing, for they then
felt that they were in truth being guided and
controlled by the Spirit of the living God, their
Master.

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All this, however, was still a matter for the future. **St. John**
But when the disciples saw Christ after the Resur- **xiv.**
rection and when they beheld Him ascend into **1-31.**
heaven, then they realised the truth of Christ's **Verses**
statements that they were united to God through **18-24.**
Christ. Then at all events they realised to the full
that the secret of being in communion with God is
to love Christ and to obey His words.

The same truth is also the basis of our Lord's
reply to Judas. The latter is the son of James
(St. Luke vi. 16), and is referred to as Thaddeus or
Lebbæus. He is a disciple of whom little is known,
but he is evidently voicing something which troubled
all the disciples, for he wants to know why Christ is
only going to manifest Himself to the disciples, and
not to the world at large. He seems to want an
ocular demonstration of power on the part of Christ
so that the world may see it, and so be forced to
acknowledge Him (cf. St. Matt. iv. 6). Our Lord's
answer is that it is to the individual believer who is
obedient to the words of his Master that the promised
Presence comes. It is not by outward demonstra-
tions of power that Christ becomes real to men,
but in the faithful response of the disciple to the
words of his Master, for "he that keepeth His
commandments abideth in Him, and He in him"
(1 John iii. 24; cf. Rev. iii. 20).

The full significance of all that our Lord had been **Verses**
saying, apparent though the truth may now be to **25-31.**
us, was evidently not fully understood by the dis-
ciples even yet. So in this closing section of His
talk our Lord reiterates in even more striking form

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St. John
xiv.
1-31.

the promises He had previously made. In the first place He gave a renewed promise of the Comforter to teach the disciples, and to bring home to them the significance of all that He had said. That promise was realised in a remarkable manner later on when the first Christians were "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost" (Acts ix. 31). For it is the Holy Spirit who dominates the disciples, emboldening them (Acts iv. 31), and above all illuminating their minds about the whole teaching of Christ (Acts iv. 8-12, 25-28, etc.).

"My
peace."

Then followed the promise of Christ's own Peace. This is one of the most treasured possessions of the Christian, and one which the first generation of Christians realised to the full. To St. Paul, one of the primary results of belief in Christ was the possession of peace (Rom. xv. 13). He declares that Christ is "our peace" (Eph. ii. 14), and he pictures this peace keeping guard over us in all the varying concerns of life (Philip. iv. 7). In all the troubles that beset the early Christians from Jews and Romans they could and did rise triumphant because their lives were hid with Christ Who had brought them Peace.

From this followed the assurance that there was Joy, and not sorrow, for the disciples in the fact that Christ was going to the Father. A very difficult thing it was for them at the moment to realise this, but the experience came after Pentecost. On that day St. Peter took the words of the Psalmist; "Thou shalt make me full of gladness in Thy Presence" (Acts ii. 28, R.V. margin), and applied them to

Parting Promises

himself, for they symbolise the truth which Christ predicted in the Upper Room. By the power of the Holy Spirit men can be full of joy in their Christian life (Rom. xv. 13), knowing that their Master ever lives to help them by His Spirit. St. John xiv. 1-31.

Thus, amongst the many truths which this chapter impresses upon us, there are at least two which may well serve for meditation. In the first place the departure of Christ to the Father is a guarantee of the future existence of the Christian in the Presence of Christ and of the Father. All the previous teaching of our Lord and all the seven great signs had brought out the fact that eternal life was possible for man through belief in Christ. In this chapter the crown is put on that teaching. Christ was going to the Father, and was taking up again His former place at God's right hand. But where He has gone His followers are also to go, and that is our definite hope for the future. The Christian's idea of immortality is not a nebulous one; it is a firm belief that when this life is over he is going to meet his Master. He does not know all he would like to know about Heaven, though he may get glimpses of the life there from some of our Lord's allusions in parables and elsewhere. But whilst the curtain is drawn over it to a certain extent, he knows at all events that Heaven is where Christ is, and he knows that to die is "to be at home with the Lord."

Whilst this is the Christian's hope for the future, there is also a hope for us in the present, because Christ is now gone to the Father. As followers of Christ we need His help to enable us to live according

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St. John to His will, and to do the work He has left us to do.
xiv. That needed help is guaranteed to us because Christ
1-31. is now at the right hand of God wielding the power of God, and the infinite power He possesses is mediated to us by His Spirit. That was the truth learned by the disciples after Pentecost and which enabled them to turn the world upside down. It is the realisation of the same truth which alone can make us worthy Christians to-day. The consciousness that the power of Christ is available for us by His Spirit gives us the needed strength to enable us to live as He wants us to live, and gives us power to do the "greater works" He waits for us to do.

MEDITATION

"Christ being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."—Acts ii. 33.

"And because ye are sons: God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."—Gal. iv. 6.

"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."—2 Cor. iii. 18.

PRAYER

God, Who as at this time didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort: through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. *Amen.*—(*Book of Common Prayer.*)

XI

THE TRUE VINE

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away : and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches : He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered ; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit ; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you : continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love ; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth : but I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain : that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own : but because ye are not of the world, but

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I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin : but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin : but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.—ST. JOHN xv. 1-25.

St. John xv. 1-25. THE first part of the Upper Room discourse ended when our Lord assured His disciples that His coming departure would bring them Peace and Joy, and not sorrow. It is probable that when Christ, at the end of this preliminary talk, said the words, "I will no more speak much with you," His disciples began to prepare to get up from their positions round the supper-table and that the command "Arise, let us go hence," brought them to their feet. It is not clear, however, whether our Lord and the disciples immediately passed out into the open air. Some writers have thought that Christ went on speaking to His disciples while they were walking through the streets of Jerusalem and out towards Gethsemane. Others have imagined that they went in silence to the hill descending to the valley of Kedron, and that on the slope of the hill our Lord stopped to speak before a vine loaded with branches. It is more probable, however, that our Lord continued His talk while they were still in the Upper Room, for the opening words of chapter xviii seem to indicate

The True Vine

that the long continuous exhortation only came to an end at that point. **St. John xv. 1-25.**

There is a close connection between the teaching in chapters xiv. and xv. The former is in one way the climax of our Lord's teaching on Eternal Life, for it shows that belief in Christ brings Life now, that this Life is to be continued by His Spirit when He passes from sight, and that the Christian after death will meet his Master again. Thus Christ had shown His disciples that His impending departure had another side to it than a sad one, and that His physical absence was to be counterbalanced by His spiritual presence. He now goes on to show by the allegory of the Vine and the Branches another aspect of the same truth.

There is no need to go far to understand why Christ used the analogy of the Vine, for it is frequently used in the Old Testament to designate the people of Israel, the chosen of God (cf. Isa. v. 1-7; Ezek. xix. 10-14; Ps. lxxx. 8-16; cf. St. Matt. xx. 1). Christ, however, refers to Himself as "the true Vine" in the sense that He is the perfection or reality of what the Jewish nation had been only an imperfect type. The Father was the "Husbandman" in both cases, since He had sent Christ into the world (cf. 1 John iv. 10), and had also chosen the Jewish people (Gen. xvii. 7, 8). But there was a vast difference between being a branch of Christ and being a branch of the Vine of Israel. In the latter case it was due to physical birth, and meant no more than being a member of a chosen race.

A spiritual union.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John In the former case it meant a spiritual birth, it
xv. 1-25. implied being linked to Christ by faith, it meant eternal life.

Hence in these first eight verses there is a constant reiteration, by the simile of the Vine and the Branches, that the disciple, the branch, must ever abide in Christ, the Vine. It is merely another way of putting the truth that the Christian must always faithfully believe in the Master Who has given to him eternal life. Our Lord varies the simile by saying, "Abide in Me and I in you," again, "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you . . ." but the truth remains the same, viz. that the life of the Christian, whether it be eternal life, the life of the spirit, or the everyday living, is assured by close contact with the Master. It is the same truth which is the basis of St. Paul's likening Christians to the members of Christ's Body (Eph. v. 30), or when he calls Christ the head of the body (Col. i. 18), and it all comes from the fundamental position mentioned in Gal. ii. 20 (R.V.), where it says, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself up for me."

Our Lord, however, was pressing home a practical lesson, for He goes on to say that the Life He gives to His followers must reveal itself in "fruit," or in actions which show the spiritual life at work. Where there is no fruit it is a sign that there is no life in the branch, and since the branch is dead it can only be cut away and destroyed. There is no need to press

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this analogy literally as has sometimes been done, **St. John xv. 1-25.** with consequent fearsome illustrations of what may happen to unfaithful followers of Christ. A warning is there, however, and it is summed up in the fact that spiritual unfaithfulness is bound to lead to spiritual death.

On the other hand, the Christian who clings faithfully to his Master will bear fruit in showing the characteristics of a practical Christian life. **Fruit and cleansing.** Living close to Christ, he will daily be taught by the Holy Spirit, he will learn to understand more deeply the words of his Master, and so he will be "cleansed" and bring forth the more abundant fruit of Christian service.

The "cleansing," moreover, may not only be through grasping more firmly the teaching of Christ, it may also come from the chastening which our sins of omission and commission necessitate.

But the great truth to be ever kept in mind is that there is no standing still for the Christian, for, to use a current expression, Christianity is not static but dynamic. It is not an ideal to be easily realised by us, but it is a power continually pressing us towards the ideal. St. Paul emphasises this when he says that those who have put on the new man must continually become new (Col. iii. 9. 10). It is this lesson which Christ emphasised. His followers must be one in spirit with Him, learning from Him, being corrected by Him, and thus growing to be more like Him. By showing the fruits of a Christlike life men show they are Christ's disciples indeed (cf. 1 John i. 3-7).

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St. John One of the practical tests of a Christlike life is **xv. 1-25.** whether a man shows brotherly love. The fruit of **Verses 9-17.** the Spirit, said St. Paul, is first of all Love (Gal. v. 22), and our Lord now puts this fact before His disciples. Like all the truths which Christ taught, the love to which He referred is no mere abstraction either in origin or in effect, for it has a foundation in a very essential Christian truth. Christian love arises from the fact which made Christianity itself possible, for it takes its rise in the love of the Father for Christ. "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world," says Christ to the Father (xvii. 24), and the whole facts of Redemption are wrapped up in this love of the Father for Christ, and of Christ for the Father (cf. Eph. i. 3-10).

But our Lord insists that the love of the Father for Christ must have its counterpart in the love of the disciples for Christ. The love must be shown in a practical way. Our Lord kept the Father's commandment even to the Cross (cf. St. Luke xxii. 42), and the disciple in his turn must keep the commandment of Christ. It is obedience which shows love to Christ, and the obedience, moreover, will bring increasing knowledge of the love of Christ. In this way the Christian experiences the Joy inseparable from the faithful believer, for he knows that neither "height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 39).

Not servants Moreover, in carrying out the commands of Christ,
but friends. His followers earn a new title, for they are not regarded as "servants" or "slaves," but are elevated

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to the rank of "friends" of Christ. What this **St. John** meant to the first body of Christians we can but **xv. 1-25.** faintly understand. Many of those who were afterwards converted were literally "slaves," the living household "chattels" of a Roman master. But Christ raised them, as He raised all who believed in Him, from their lowly status to the status of "friends." About the time when our Lord lived, it was a common thing for the Roman Emperor to grant to one of his favourites the title of "Friend of the Emperor." Since this was the case it is not surprising that the term "Friend of Christ" is found so often in the writings of the Fathers, for it struck the imagination of the early Christians that however lowly their position in this world's eyes, the eternal Son of God had thought fit to call them "friends."

Some will find a parallel to this in the Old Testament, where Abraham is described as the friend of God (cf. Isa. xli. 8), and they will think of the occasion when "the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. xxxiii. 11). As they do so they will marvel that the term "friend of God," which seems so fitting for Abraham or Moses, should be offered to the lowliest Christian. But there is nothing of presumption in this that the most insignificant Christian can be the "friend of Christ." For, as our Lord says, He has chosen His disciples and not they Him. He has come and shown them Himself as "the Way, the Truth and the Life," and He has given them the closest opportunities of learning from Him. Their

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St. John faith and obedience are asked for, and when those
xv. 1-25. are given, then the privilege of being His "friends" is given in return.

The Apostles, Peter, James, John or Paul, never refer to themselves as the "friends" of Christ when writing to the Christian Churches. St. Paul begins his Epistle to the Romans by calling himself "a slave of Jesus Christ" (Rom. i. 1), as do also James and Jude. It is the true starting-point, though it is only the starting-point. They were "slaves" of Christ because they were purchased by His Blood, but they were His "friends" also because He had made known to them the counsels of God, and had called them to live and work for Him.

Verses
18-25.

Our Lord's insistence on the spirit of brotherly love seems to have been given not only because it is the basis of a true Christian life, but also because of the coming experiences of His disciples. Some, like Peter and John, were to be imprisoned by the Jews (Acts iv. 1-3), others, like Stephen (Acts vii.) and James (Acts xii. 2), were soon to suffer martyrdom, whilst Paul and Silas were to suffer from Jew and Roman alike. It seems an extraordinary thing that men who were preaching the Gospel of Redemption should be so treated.

The
world's
hatred.

Christ, however, reminded His disciples that the "world" had hated Himself, a fact of which they were soon to be forcibly reminded when they saw their Master hanging on the Cross. It might seem strange, but it was after all only typical of the "world." Men needed salvation, and yet when salvation was offered through Christ, men rejected

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Him because the conditions of salvation were not to St. John their liking (cf. i. 11). So when the disciples began **xv. 1-25.** to preach the way of the Cross they had the same experience (cf. St. Matt. x. 16-39). The Jews found their teaching "a stumbling-block," and the Greeks considered it "foolishness" (1 Cor. i. 23), and the disciples therefore suffered rejection at such places as Lycaonia, Ephesus, Thessalonica and Rome just as their Master had done at Nazareth, Capernaum and Jerusalem.

The reason for this hatred of Christ and His disciples is twofold. It is based on ignorance first of all, because, as our Lord said, "they know not Him that sent Me." This note of opposition based on ignorance is traceable throughout St. John's Gospel. Whilst Christ's words and signs attracted many, they also hardened the ignorant prejudices of those who had made up their minds how Christ should come and what He should teach. This ignorance based on prejudice hardened into fierce opposition and blinded the Jews until it meant ultimately Calvary for Christ, and imprisonment and death for most of the Twelve.

The other reason for this hatred of Christ and of the disciples is men's hatred for God. This statement of our Lord seems surprising at first. "We needs must love the highest when we see it"—such is the feeling of most of us. We imagine that if an ideal or some perfection is put before men they will be attracted by it and not repelled. This being the case, we assume that men will always respond to the call of God, because God in Christ

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St. John always calls to the highest and best in men. This **xv. 1-25.** is unquestionably true so far as it goes, but there is another side to it. When our Lord's brethren were urging Him to go to the Feast of Tabernacles He said, "The world hateth Me because I testify of it, that its works are evil" (vii. 7). So when Christ condemns sin though not the sinner, it sometimes happens that the sinner resents the condemnation. The Jews in their blindness did so, and many a sinful man to-day condemns the Voice which challenges his sinful follies. Hardening in sin means too often a hardening of conscience and a repudiation of the right of God or man to interfere with the sinner and his sin.

So these verses call us to practical considerations in our own Christian lives. First and foremost is the need for living constantly close to our Master. The simile of the Vine and the Branches is only an illustration of what our relationship to Christ should be. In closest union with Him we draw from Him "life" in the fullest sense of the word, "the life which is life indeed" (1 Tim. vi. 19, R.V.).

As part of that union we must reflect the spirit of love which animates our Master, otherwise we are not in perfect union with Christ. There cannot be love for Christ and hatred for our fellows in our hearts at the same time. The love must cast out the hatred, or the hatred will inevitably quench the love.

This is a very practical point, because it is inevitable that our attempt to follow Christ is going to raise dislike for us amongst those who hate that for

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which Christ stands. But it is our duty as Christians **St. John** to show the spirit of love even to Christ's enemies, **xv. 1-25.** and it is our business as followers of Christ to reveal a spirit very different from the ordinary worldly standard of conduct. "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? . . . But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven . . ." (St. Matt. v. 46, 47, 44, 45 ff.).

PRAYERS

O Lord Jesus Christ, the source of all things: We thank Thee for the knowledge that in Thee is the Life which never endeth: Keep us ever close to Thee, the Author and Giver of our Life, both temporal and eternal: We ask it for Thy Name's sake. *Amen.*—(T. W. G.)

Heavenly Father, may we this day be followers of Thee, walking in love, even as Christ also has loved us. Grant us grace to draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation. Thus refreshed may we run with patience the Christian race, and fight the good fight of faith. Make us to abound in every good word and work. Keep us humble, thankful, and watchful to the end. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, hear us, bless us, and keep us this day, we humbly beseech Thee. *Amen.*—(DEAN GOULBURN.)

XII

THE COMFORTER

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me : And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues : yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to him that sent me ; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou ? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth : It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment : Of sin, because they believe not on me ; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more ; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth : for he shall not speak of himself ; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak : and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me : for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine : therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you. A little while, and ye shall not see me : and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. Then said *some* of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me : and again a little while, and ye shall see me ; and, Because I go to the Father ?

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They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name; and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the word, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.—ST. JOHN XV. 26, 27; XVI. 1-33.

FOR our own convenience we stopped short at verse 25 of chapter xv., but there is no real pause in our Lord's exhortation to the disciples. It was a convenient point for us at which to stop when Christ had indicated the inevitability of the opposition and hatred in store for His disciples. This same pre-

St. John
xv. 26,
27 ; xvi.
1-33.
Verses 1-7.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John diction, however, is carried on into the sixteenth
xv. 26, chapter, though with the background of a promise
27 ; xvi. which takes the shadow from the gloomy beginning.
I-33.

The prophecy of the coming persecution of the disciples is not given with any idea of depressing them. Our Lord's purpose was rather to forewarn them so that they would not "stumble," or become faint-hearted, when the trouble came. Christ said that He had not previously dwelt very much on these things. It is true that when He sent out the Twelve on their first mission He predicted some of the sufferings in store for them (St. Matt. x. 16-23). But while He was there to guard and guide them He had not said much on this score. Now, however, when He was to be removed from their bodily eyes it was necessary for them to be forewarned. Hence the prediction of trouble is definite. They are to be "put out of the synagogues," and become religious and social outcasts shunned by their orthodox friends (cf. ix. 22, 34). They are to be faced with death at the hands of those who would think it a service rendered to God (cf. Acts ix. 1, 2). The whole Jewish religious organisation, generally speaking, would be banded together in the effort to stamp out Christians.

The reason for such a persecution, says our Lord, lies in the fact that "they have not known the Father, nor Me." The Jewish world was outwardly religious, but it had lost the spirit of religion, it was ostentatiously serving the God of Israel whilst displaying the spirit of the Evil One; to outward seeming it was the orthodox servant of the Most

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High, and yet it was blind to the One Who showed it the God Whom it professed to serve. The Jewish people as a nation had shown their spiritual blindness when Christ tried to teach them (ix. 41), and that blindness caused them to hang Christ on the Cross. But the same blindness was to overshadow them when the disciples carried on the work of their Master in Palestine and elsewhere. There were successes for the disciples, it is true; there was a heartening record of men "turned from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts xxvi. 18). But there was also a trail of suffering and sacrifice traceable from Jerusalem to Rome. The experience of the disciples as of their Master was to show that the world knew not the Father nor Christ.

This, however, was only one side of the persecution, for our Lord indicates that the persecution, though it might prove, was a way by which the Holy Spirit was to work in the hearts of men generally. The Holy Spirit was to come to the disciples after Christ's departure, and His coming, our Lord says, was to "convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (vv. 8, 9, R.V.).

The mode of this conviction of sin indicates that it will come as one of the results of the persecution which the disciples will have to endure. When they are harshly treated by their non-Christian brethren, and when they are haled before rulers and kings for preaching Christ and the Resurrection, their sufferings are ultimately to be for good. Jews

St. John
xv. 26,
27 ; xvi.
1-33.

Verses
7-11.

Convicting
the world.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John xv. 26, 27 ; xvi. 1-33. and Romans in blind intolerance may persecute them, but their behaviour under trial is going to recoil on the head of the persecutor. So when Peter and John are brought to trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin, the latter are so struck with their bearing that " they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus " (Acts iv. 13)—they were being convicted of sin, by the Holy Spirit. When Felix, the Roman Governor, terrified by Paul's speaking, said, " When I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me " (Acts xxiv. 25), he was being convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, the preaching of the Apostles was to have the same result. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit by the mouth of Peter convicted the Jews of the sin of slaying their Messiah, and 3,000 of them repented (ii. 41). A similar result was also seen after the healing of the lame man (Acts iii. and iv. 1-4).

So by their example in time of persecution and by their spoken testimony, the Holy Spirit used the followers of Christ to convict men of sin and to bring them to repentance.

Moreover, Christ says the Holy Spirit was to convict the world " of righteousness, because I go to the Father." There is here an implied contrast between the Jewish idea of righteousness and that of Christ. The former was the Pharisaic idea of a religious observance which was outwardly righteous but which could be inwardly full of hypocrisy and iniquity (cf. St. Matt. xxiii.). The best test of such a righteousness was its attitude to Christ and to His

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disciples (cf. v. 43 . . .), and it was the utter condemnation of the Jewish notion of righteousness that they nailed to the Cross Him Whom Jeremiah predicted as "the Lord our righteousness" (Jer. xxiii. 6). But the position of Christ was assured and not destroyed, when He went to the Father by way of Calvary. St. Paul says that Christ "was declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection of the dead" (Rom. i. 4), whilst St. Peter declared on the day of Pentecost "that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts ii. 36). The very means which brought the righteousness of the Jews to the test and condemned it were the means by which Christ was exalted. Thus the world's standard of righteousness was shown to be a completely false one.

Further, the Holy Spirit was to convict the world in respect of judgment "because the prince of this world hath been judged." When our Lord had been speaking, after His interview with the inquiring Greeks, He had intimated that the prince of this world was to be cast out by His own sacrificial death (xii. 31, 32). So now He says that the Holy Spirit will show men that the Cross has destroyed the power of the devil. Hence a few weeks later, when St. Peter was speaking before the Jewish rulers, he said that the Jesus whom they had crucified had been exalted by God "to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins." He went on to say also that "we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost" (Acts v. 31, 32). In these words St. Peter was show-

St. John
xv. 26,
27; xvi.
1-33.

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St. John
xv. 26,
27 ; xvi.
1-33.

ing on the one hand the power of the Cross in that remission of sins was possible by Christ Who " bore our sins in His own body up to the tree " (1 Pet. ii. 24, R.V. marg.). He showed, on the other hand, that the Holy Spirit was a " witness " to these things. Hence it may be said that every one who receives " remission of sins " is a living proof that the prince of this world has been judged, and that it is the Holy Spirit Who brings home to the repentant sinner the value of Christ's death. In this way the Holy Spirit judges the prince of this world.

St. John
xv. 26, 27;
xvi. 5-7,
12-15, 16-
24.

What Christ had now said would enable the disciples to understand something of the importance of the Holy Spirit's coming. Their minds were for the moment naturally obsessed with the thought that they were to lose their Master from their sight. But His bodily absence was inevitable sooner or later, and His bodily absence was essential if His Spirit was to be available for the help of man. Our Lord therefore points out some of the benefits which the coming of the Holy Spirit will bring.

In the first place, the Holy Spirit was to guide the disciples continually into the truth of God. Even during the earthly life of Christ the disciples had not understood much of what their Master had said, for there were times when they did not comprehend the significance of His words and actions (cf. ii. 22; xii. 16). " They understood not this saying," we are told on one occasion; on another, " this saying was hid from them," whilst on such an important matter as the Resurrection " they knew not the Scripture that He must rise from the dead."

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But the Holy Spirit was now to become the interpreter of Christ's life and words, and the speeches of St. Peter and St. Paul in the Acts of the Apostles are eloquent testimony to this. They see that it is the Holy Spirit Who speaks by the mouth of our father David (Acts iv. 25), it is the Holy Spirit Who opens their minds and guides them concerning the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, and Who tells them of the rejection of Christ by the Jews.

St. John
xv. 26,
27 ; xvi.
1-33.
The Holy
Spirit as
interpreter.

This fact was also linked up with our Lord's statement that there was much that our Lord had not been able to tell His disciples. "They could not bear them now" simply because their spiritual understanding was still immature. But the Holy Spirit was to guide them into all the truth. Whether it be concerning the Person of Christ, or the words of Christ; whether it be the position of Jew and Gentile in relation to redemption; it was the Holy Spirit Who was to lead the disciples into the truth about them. From this it will be seen that the teaching of the Holy Spirit would in a sense be nothing new. His message would be the message of the Father just as was our Lord's (xiv. 10), but there would be new value in it for the disciples because of their new enlightenment.

Such a result will inevitably tend to the glory of Christ. As the Holy Spirit testifies to the power of the Death and Resurrection of Christ and of all that our Lord has said and done, this will inevitably bring home to men the value of Christ's work, and thus make them love and worship Christ the more.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John Therefore in this way the Holy Spirit will glorify
xv. 26, Christ in the hearts of men (cf. 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18).
27 ; xvi. But the great joy also in store for them was that
1-33. Christ was to show Himself to them again. The

disciples were at a loss first of all when Christ declared that in a little while they would not see Him, and again a little while they would see Him. There is nothing here to contradict the fact that in chapter xiv. our Lord had spoken so clearly of the meaning of death; but it certainly sounded strange to the disciples that after a short while they were not to see their Master, while after a time they were to see Him because He was going to the Father.

The explanation is plain to us who know what eventually happened. They were to see Him for a few hours longer before the Cross and the Tomb hid Him from their sight, but they were to meet Him again after the Resurrection, and above all they were to meet Him in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit from Pentecost onwards.

For the moment, however, the disciples were mystified, and so Christ explains away their difficulty. He gives the homely illustration of a woman in childbirth (cf. Isa. lxvi. 7-11), whose pain of travail is forgotten in the joy of motherhood. And so He seems to say that sorrow is settling on them as the shadow of His Cross and Death comes upon them, but when He sees them after His Resurrection during the forty days, and when He appears to them after His Ascension by His Spirit, then the joy of His continuing presence in Spirit would be theirs for

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ever. In that union and communion with Christ will be the satisfaction of all their longings. **St. John xv. 26,**

The last few verses of this chapter are the final words of Christ directed to His disciples, and very appropriately, therefore, they sum up the essential truth to which Christ had been pointing. He tells them that up to the present He has spoken to them only in proverbs or parables (cf. x. 6). Much of His teaching had ever been in this form (cf. St. Matt. xiii.), and had been tempered to their capacity to receive it. But one of the fruits of His coming union with them by the Spirit is that there will be no more parabolic instruction, but plain open revelation of the Father. **27 ; xvi. 1-33. Verses 25-33.**

The further result would be that through the Holy Spirit they would know that they were in close and living union with the Father. Hence our Lord says, "I will not pray the Father for you," because there was no need for this when they were in union with the Father. They would need Christ's mediation when they fell away by sin (1 John ii. 1 ; Rom. viii. 34 ; Heb. vii. 25), but their normal condition would be fellowship "in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6).

When this condition was accomplished, then the work that Christ came to do would be completed. "Eternal life," the theme of St. John's Gospel (xx. 31), is fellowship with the Father, as Christ had just been making clear. Therefore when He went on to say, "I came out from the Father, and am come into the world : again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father," the disciples understood what had not been clear to them before. Christ had come from

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John the Father, not to establish a temporal kingdom
xv. 26, but to make a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom of those
27 ; xvi. who were united to the Father through faith in
i-33. Christ. He had now done almost all that He could
do for the purpose, the Cross alone remained, and
therefore He was returning to the Father with His
work finished. The disciples would now under-
stand this, their lingering doubts were answered
(cf. v. 19), for they saw clearly what they had but
dimly grasped before.

The speech ends on a note of warning and of
comfort. Our Lord says to the disciples who have
professed their faith in Him, "Ye do now believe,"
and His words are a statement of fact, and not a
query, as the Authorised Version gives it. But even
though they believe, the Cross has not fully entered
into their thought. The moment was at hand when
they were to be scattered, leaving Christ to face the
agony and shame of Calvary by the help of the
Father alone (St. Matt. xxvi. 31, 56). Such is the
warning.

"I have
overcome
the
world."

On the other hand, there is for the disciples an
assurance of peace as they trust in Christ. "In the
world" there is always to be tribulation, such as
they were shortly to experience. "Tribulation"
is the common lot of mankind, but it was to be
accentuated by the experiences of the disciples when
they followed in the footsteps of their Master,
preaching. But "in Christ" there was to be peace;
their inner life was to be free from stress. Like
St. Paul they might later on be "in stripes, in
imprisonments, in tumults" (2 Cor. vi. 5), but like

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him they would be able to say "we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair" (2 Cor. iv. 8). They would have an inward peace in spite of outward circumstances, because their Lord and Master had triumphed over the world (cf. 1 John iv. 4; v. 4).

St. John
xv. 26,
27; xvi.
1-33.

These final words of our Lord to His disciples are thus of the greatest value to ourselves to-day. From them we learn that the Holy Spirit makes real to us the fact of our union with Christ and that the Holy Spirit thus makes a living reality of the Eternal Life which Christ offers to those who believe in Him.

We learn also that the Christian life is a life of communion and fellowship with Christ. This truth can be seen amplified in the First Epistle of St. John, but it comes from these parting words of our Lord in the Upper Room. And this life of daily and hourly communion with Christ is possible by the power of His Spirit.

Moreover, in this life with Christ the Holy Spirit is to teach us and guide us. It is sometimes said that "God has still much more truth to break forth from the Bible," and these words of a seventeenth-century Puritan are only another way of saying that the Holy Spirit is still guiding and teaching men. There are no new facts to be taught, for the work of Redemption is a "finished work." But there is still much to be learned about the fruits of Redemption, and we have not yet measured "the height and depth of the love of Christ," which even to St. Paul "passeth knowledge."

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John
xv. 26,
27; xvi.
1-33.

PRAYERS

O God, Who didst give Thy only begotten Son to be for us the Way, the Truth and the Life: We thank Thee that in Him is Life for all who believe in Him: Help us by Thy Holy Spirit to continue in loving dependence upon our Master. Clear away the mists from our eyes that we may see Him Who is invisible. Keep us in continual communion with Christ that we may taste in this world the joys which Thou hast for us in eternity: Through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*—(T. W. G.)

O heavenly Father, Who dost teach Thy children in many ways: Help us by Thy Holy Spirit ever to look for Thy guidance: May Thy Spirit enlighten our undertaking, giving us a teachable mind and a readiness ever to learn Thy will for us: May Thy Holy Spirit reveal to us the full meaning of what is contained in Thy holy word, so that we may use it for the blessing of our own souls and for the benefit of our fellow-creatures: These mercies we humbly ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*—(T. W. G.)

XIII

THE LORD'S OWN PRAYER

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent

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them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them. —ST. JOHN XVII. 1-26.

**St. John
xvii.
1-26.**

OUR Lord's promises in chapter xvi. close His address to His disciples, and He does not speak to them again directly as a body until He meets them after the Resurrection. But the disciples are permitted to listen to a prayer such as none other ever prayed or could pray, for they hear Christ speaking directly to the Father.

There are frequent references in the Gospels, and especially in St. Luke, to the prayers of Christ, both public and private (cf. St. Luke iii. 21; vi. 12; ix. 18, 28; x. 21; xi. 1; xxii. 32, 41; xxiii. 34, 46; xxiv. 30, 50). There is elsewhere, however, no record of such a prayer as this, which as it were throws back the gate of heaven and enables us to see Christ in close converse with Him Who is invisible.

The prayer is sometimes called the Great High Priestly Prayer, in so far as it is an intercession on

The Lord's Own Prayer

behalf of the disciples and of Christians generally. **St. John**
It has also been called the Prayer of Consecration **xvii.**
in that Christ was setting apart His disciples for the **1-26.**
work of spreading the gospel. It might also be called
the Prayer of the Son of God, for it was the Lord's
Prayer which He prayed for Himself and for others,
as contrasted with the Lord's Prayer which He
taught His disciples to pray. But whatever name
we give it, the essential thing is that we are permitted
to hear Christ in converse with the Father, and to
hear the Eternal Son of God speaking freely with the
Eternal Father.

The prayer begins with the statement that "the **Verses 1-5.**
hour is come," and the phrase illuminates how the **Christ**
Cross dominates the mind of Christ. The expression **prays for**
"the hour" had been used in Christ's talk with the **Himself.**
Greeks (xii. 27), it was mentioned by St. John when
our Lord and His disciples first gathered in the Upper
Room (xiii. 1), and He uses it again now ere He goes
to Gethsemane. The Cross was the dominating
fact in our Lord's mind, just as it became later in the
minds of the Apostles, for, contradictory though it
may sound, the death of Christ explains the purpose
of His life.

It is this which explains why Christ should go on
to say, "Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may
glorify Thee." The felon's death might seem
nothing but humiliating both to Romans and Jews,
yet it was not so in the thought of Christ. It was
undoubtedly humiliating and degrading in the eyes
of men, and Christ as man shrank from it: but it
was His glory also in that the Cross was for the re-

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St. John
xvii.
1-26.

demption of man. Moreover, the Cross did not stand alone. Calvary could not be separated from the Resurrection, since the latter guaranteed that all that Christ had said was true (cf. Rom. i. 4): it could not be separated from the Ascension, since the latter was a type of the ascension of the believer in Christ (cf. Eph. ii. 6); it could not be separated from Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit made real to men the power of Christ's redemptive death (cf. Eph. ii. 13-18). The prayer of Christ is thus in effect a request that the Father will help Christ through the agony of Calvary, and that the Resurrection and Ascension and Pentecost may make real to men the salvation which Christ came to accomplish. In this, therefore, the Son and the Father will be glorified.

From this follows quite naturally the thought that Eternal Life is given to those who know "Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." To "know" God and Christ is not simply to have a mental understanding of them. It implies a "knowledge" which brings them into our mind and heart and will, a "knowledge" which dominates us with the fact of who they are, what they have done for us, and what they offer us. Since Christ left the glory of heaven for us and lived our lives and knows us as we are: since He died for us, and in dying "carried our sins in His own body up to the tree": since He rose again, ascended to His former sphere and sent His Holy Spirit to make real to us His offer of Redemption and His promise of eternal life—there is here a "knowledge" which

The Lord's Own Prayer

brings us into the closest personal relationship to **St. John Him.** As we accept His promises He takes possession of our lives; in one sense we live our ordinary life as before, but it is a new life in that Christ is the mainspring of our every action and the controlling force of all we do. Like St. Paul we say, "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. ii. 20, R.V.). It is this "knowledge" which is eternal life, for it is the submerging, so to speak, of our life in the life of the eternal Son of God.

This is the glory which Christ brought to the Father, the glory of men "born again" to live their lives by the power of Christ and by His Spirit. When Christ's plan to this end has been accomplished and His work "finished," He prays that in return He Himself may be glorified by returning to the state He had in heaven prior to His Incarnation.

Our Lord's thoughts then turn naturally from His work of redemption to the disciples who are to proclaim the message of redemption after His departure. These Jewish fishermen and business men had been chosen by Christ. With all their limitations He had selected them and taught them by His own life and by His words. To these chosen few He had "manifested God's name" as the Father Who had sent His Son into the world "that the world through Him might be saved" (iii. 17). And these men had "received" and "known" and "believed" Christ and His words.

St. John
xvii.
I-26.

Verses
6-19.
Christ prays
for the
disciples.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John
xvii.
1-26.

Therefore Christ prays for them. He was not praying at that time for "the world," though Christ did pray for the world at other times, and a few moments later His prayer was "that the world may believe that Thou didst send me" (v. 21). But His immediate thought was for the disciples, who were "His" in a peculiar sense, since they were the first to believe in Him. If there was a future glory awaiting Christ when He resumed His former heavenly state, there was also an immediate glory in the "belief" of the disciples who were to carry the news of redemption to mankind. In this, therefore, Christ was glorified in the disciples, both because of their belief, and because of what their belief was to mean in extending Christ's kingdom.

Hence we can understand the peculiar significance of our Lord's prayer for the disciples. "Holy Father," He says, "keep them in Thy name," and the word "Holy" gives the keynote of what is in Christ's mind. Our Lord is thinking of the character of God as purity, righteousness and sinlessness, the characteristics which are peculiar to the eternal Father and which differentiate Him from the world (cf. 1 John ii. 15, 16). He wants His disciples "kept" in these characteristics of the "Holy" God, and "separated" from the world which refuses to follow the line of conduct for which "holiness" stands.

Christ does not pray the Father to "take them out of the world," since His purpose in choosing them is to send them forth to evangelise the world.

The Lord's Own Prayer

He prays, however, that they shall be kept from the "evil one" (R.V.). Our Lord is very conscious of the power making for wrongdoing amongst men, just as St. John himself realised it later on (1 John iii. 7, 8). Therefore, in view of the task which He is committing to His disciples, He wants the keeping power of the Father for them.

St. John
xvii.
1-26.

One of the ways by which they are to be kept is through the Father sanctifying them in the truth. This has a parallel in Christ's statement that He Himself was sanctified and sent into the world by the Father (x. 36), and in His further statement in verse 19, that He "sanctifies" Himself for the sake of the disciples. So far as our Lord is concerned the "sanctification" or "consecration" means that He surrendered everything in order to come and redeem mankind. For the disciples it will mean a self-dedication to the work of preaching the Gospel, a renunciation of everything which will hinder their message, and a concentration of energy in the task of showing the world what redemption means.

It will be, moreover, a "sanctification" or consecration of the disciples "in the truth" (R.V.), and, as Christ adds, "Thy word is truth." It is the record of Christ's life and teaching to which reference is made, and it therefore implies that the disciples are to be set apart to proclaim the word of the Father as revealed by Christ. Thus the disciples are to be consecrated to the work of spreading abroad the truth which the Gospels and Epistles contain.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John
xvii.
1-26.
Verses
20-26.
Christ
prays for
the Church
at large.

Then our Lord's thoughts naturally travel to those who will be influenced by the preaching of the disciples. He prays that "they all may be one : as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us." Christ looks forward to a time when there will be a large body of Christians, and He prays for their unity. But the unity for which He prays is to be based upon the fundamental fact of the Christian faith, which is belief in Christ. There is no question here of some particular form of organisation as the outward sign of Christian unity, it is a spiritual factor which our Lord emphasises as the basis of unity. Just as there is a unity between Christ and the Father, so there is a unity between Christ and the Christian; and because there is a unity between Christ and the individual Christian, so there will be a spiritual unity between these individual Christians because of their faith in Christ.

Because of this unity of spirit between believers in Christ, our Lord says the world will inevitably be influenced. The spirit of unity is desirable in itself and should be inevitable amongst Christians, but the importance of it in our Lord's thought is that "the world may believe" (v. 21) and "that the world may know" (v. 23) the truth as it is in Jesus.

From this one can understand what Christ means when He says, "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them" (v. 22). Christ's glory is His Eternal Sonship, and believers in Him have the privilege of becoming sons of God. St. Paul saw this later when he wrote of Christians being "conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be

The Lord's Own Prayer

the firstborn among many brethren " (Rom. viii. 29). **St. John**
Thus the glory given by Christ is the glory of being **xvii.**
sons of God. **I-26.**

Moreover, our Lord prays that the disciples may see His own eternal glory when they pass from this world to heaven (v. 24). They had seen Christ as Man, they had learned to believe in Him while He was yet in human form, and a reward for their faith will be that they will see Him in the glory which He shared with the Father before the foundation of the world.

So this divine prayer comes to its conclusion. It starts in the atmosphere of the Cross and of Redemption, which betokens what the love of God will do for a sinful world. It passes on to the disciples by whom the message of Redemption was to be carried, surrounding them with thoughtful and purifying love. It reaches out to the mass of mankind who were to be influenced by His all-embracing and redemptive love, and it comes back finally to an assurance of eternal joy for the faithful followers of Christ.

In meditating over this prayer of our Lord there are three things in particular which are worthy of our closest thought.

First and most important is the fact of **Eternal** **Eternal**
Life. To give Eternal Life is the reason for the **Life.**
coming of Christ into the world. By His Cross He carried away our sin which separated us from God, and as we accept His all-sufficient sacrifice the burden of our sin is removed. With the guilt of sin gone

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John xvii. 1-26. from us we enter upon a life of fellowship with Christ, and we begin the life of union with Him which is but a foretaste of the fuller and freer life which awaits us beyond the grave. Therefore to know our Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour is to be let into the knowledge of God and of His love for us, and in that knowledge is Eternal Life.

Christian unity. But as Christians we share this knowledge of Eternal Life with countless others, and because of this common experience we should be bound in spirit with all who know Christ. This is the true Christian Unity. Ecclesiastical organisation is important and necessary, but it can never be the basis of Christian Unity. The great emphasis so often given to-day to Episcopacy as being essential to Christian Unity is unwarranted in view of our Lord's statement in the Upper Room. Spiritual unity is what our Master looks for, and that unity can come by common devotion to our common Lord. When we know Christ as our Saviour and as the Giver of Eternal Life, with all that is involved in this truth, then there is a love and loyalty to Him that is not of man. Such knowledge kindles a spirit of devotion to Christ which links Christians the world over. It breaks down barriers of class, of race, and of caste; it sweeps aside the restrictive influence of ecclesiastical organisations and bands men as brothers in common worship and common service to their common Lord.

The impelling influence of this unity is, as our Lord put it, the "glory" He gave to the disciples and which He gives to us, and that is the glory of

The Lord's Own Prayer

being "sons of God." To be "children of God" St. John is our privilege now in this world, but there is the **xvii.** greater glory awaiting us of seeing Christ in His **1-26.** eternal glory. This is a promise which uplifts the **The final** Christian beyond the immediate present, and which **glory.** bids him look forward always in hope. Whilst he is living day by day in close dependence upon Christ, hearkening to His voice, and being guided by His Spirit, he may long for the more open vision of the Master he loves. That longing will one day be satisfied when he passes from this world to the next, and when in company with those who have gone before he will see Christ in all His glory. It is a hope which enables him to live on and to work on with joyous expectation, waiting for the time when he shall see his Master "in the glory He had with the Father before the world was."

Therefore our final thought should be of Christ Himself, Who opened out His heart in the Upper Room and in so doing revealed His all-embracing love for us. When we see what He Himself thought of the Cross and of its power in the securing of Eternal Life, we can thank Him by accepting all He offers. When we consider what He expects in this world in the way of unity amongst Christians, we can try to make that Unity a practical and living reality. And as we think of what the future has in store for us we can lift up our hearts in praise to our Master Who has given us everything for this world and for eternity.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John
xvii.
1-26.

PRAYERS

Most merciful Father, Giver of every good gift, Who hast given us, Thy servants, so many and great blessings, forgive us, we beseech Thee, our sins; sanctify us with Thy Truth, O Thou Who art the most merciful Sanctifier of all. Kindle our hearts with the fire of Thy love: grant us ever to walk in the light of Thy Divine Presence: and that, seeking Thee alone, we may attain unto Thee, and taught by Thee, we may teach others Thy paths, so that we may together hasten unto Thee, the true Shepherd of our souls. And do Thou, Lord Jesus, vouchsafe to bear us on Thy shoulders, us whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious blood, and to place us in Thy green pastures: Who liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*—(E. B. PUSEY.)

O merciful God, bless Thy Church throughout all the world, and all those who love Thee in sincerity, although they follow not with us in all things. Heal all strife, divisions, and discord, and make us all Thine in willing devotion as we are all Thine by Redemption and Grace: for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*—(H. W. TURNER.)

XIV

THE ARREST AND TRIAL OF JESUS

When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place; for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples. Judas then, having received a band of *men* and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, I am *he*. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am *he*, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am *he*: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none. Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and *so did* another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door, without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. Then said the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also *one* of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there,

The Gospel according to St. John

who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold : and they warmed themselves : and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them : behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil : but if well, why smitest thou me? Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also *one* of his disciples? He denied *it*, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being *his* kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again : and immediately the cock crew.

Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment : and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death : That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die. Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me : what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world : if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews : but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault *at all*. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover:

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will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews ? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged *him*. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put *it* on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, And said, Hail, King of the Jews ! and they smote him with their hands. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And *Pilate* saith unto them, Behold the man ! When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify *him*, crucify *him*. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify *him* : for I find no fault in him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid ; And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus. Whence art thou ? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me ? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee ? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from above : therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him : but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend : whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour : and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King ! But they cried out, Away with *him*, away with *him*, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King ? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar. Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led *him* away.—ST. JOHN XVIII. 1-40 ; XIX. 1-16.

In the Upper Room had been revealed some of St. John the most wonderful of Christ's teaching, but it is xviii. immediately after this revelation of His love that I-40 ; our Lord goes to meet the hatred of the betrayer xix. and of the chief priests. During the previous week I-16. He had been in the habit of going out of Jerusalem St. John xviii. 1-11.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John to spend the night in prayer in the Garden of
xviii. Gethsemane (St. Luke xxi. 37), and so again in
I-40; company with the Eleven He made His way to the
xix. same place.
I-16.

Judas Iscariot had evidently been on the watch to see if Christ and His disciples were going to the usual place of prayer, and as soon as he was assured of this he hurried off to seize the opportunity of betraying our Lord "in the absence of the multitude" (St. Luke xxii. 6). Preparations had evidently been going on in expectation of such a move on the part of Judas. The chief priests had obviously been in communication with the commander of the Roman legion which was stationed in the citadel of Antonia near the Temple. Within a short time, therefore, Judas, in company with some of the Jewish authorities, was leading a band of possibly 500 soldiers, to effect the arrest of Christ.

This striking array of military force, however, had only power because our Lord willed it so. He was aware of the intentions of Judas (cf. xiii. 21, 27) and He was also aware that the betrayer was cognisant of His practice of going to Gethsemane. Yet He deliberately went to Gethsemane when He might have avoided it, and so might have escaped death. Moreover, when Judas appeared with the soldiers our Lord acted in such a way as to place beyond all shadow of doubt that His surrender to death was voluntary. He steps forward with the inquiry, "Whom seek ye?" and He is answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." The answer was strange in view of the fact that Christ was well known to the

The Arrest and Trial of Jesus

Jewish leaders, and that Judas had already given the betrayal kiss (St. Matt. xxvi. 49). If it was the chief priests who were in the forefront with Judas leading the troops (cf. St. Luke xxii. 52, 53), we can imagine that the fate of those who had wished to seize Elijah may have been in their mind (2 Kings i. 9-12). This would account for the fact that they replied cautiously, "We want Jesus of Nazareth," instead of saying directly "We have come to arrest Thee."

St. John
xviii.
1-40;
xix.
1-16.

Even this reply, however, produced a result not altogether expected. Our Lord immediately stepped forward with the words "I am He," and as He uttered the words, those who were facing Him collapsed to the ground. That this collapse was due to fear of attack by Christ and His eleven followers is out of the question when one bears in mind the large number of Roman soldiers present. The reason can only lie in the majesty of Christ, Who in some way struck fear into the hearts of those who would arrest Him.

This sense of His power at all events enabled our Lord to secure the safety of the disciples, for the soldiers were quite content to listen to Christ's request to "let these go their way."

Moreover, our Lord forbade any violent action in His support. Peter in his blind frenzy aimed a blow at the head of a servant of the high priest, and was evidently determined to wreak vengeance on one who served the Jewish leader who had entrapped his Master. But such desperate heroism earned rebuke and not praise from Christ. He had gone

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John voluntarily to the garden knowing what was in
xviii. store, and He had shown His power even as He stood
i-40; forward offering Himself for arrest. He was going
xix. to drink the cup quite freely since it was in the will
i-16. of the Father (St. Matt. xxvi. 39, 42).

So St. John brings out the great truth of the voluntary surrender of Christ to death. The power of our Lord is unmistakably there the whole time, but it is put on one side that He may be "obedient to death."

St. John At the moment of Christ's arrest all the disciples
xviii. 15-18, "forsook Him and fled" (St. Mark xiv. 50). In
25-27. spite of their previous protestations of faithfulness (St. Mark xiv. 31), and in spite of their observance of Christ's power in the garden, they took advantage of their opportunity and escaped. Two of them, however, had not sunk to this low level of cowardice, and these were Peter and "another disciple," who no doubt was St. John. These two followed after Christ and His captors, though in the case of Peter he followed "afar off" (St. Matt. xxvi. 58). It was this half-hearted loyalty of Peter which proved his undoing.

St. John had evidently kept as near to his Master as the soldiers would allow, and he had been permitted to enter the court of the high priest. The Gospel says that John "was known unto the high priest." This may have been due to the fact that business relations brought John into contact with the household of the high priest (cf. St. Luke v. 10), and it is significant that the name of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, is only given by St. John.

The Arrest and Trial of Jesus

At all events he was admitted to the courtyard without question.

St. John
xviii.

Peter, however, whether through being too "far off" in the rear and not going in with the others, or whether through actual fear of possible consequences, was standing outside the door of the courtyard. St. John therefore went to the woman porter, and got her to let Peter come in. This circumstance would naturally fix the attention of the portress on Peter. There could be no secret of the fact that John was a disciple of Christ, and the association of Peter with John would cause her to think that Peter was also connected with Christ. Her question, "Art not thou ALSO one of this man's disciples?" was more or less an assumption of fact, and a perfectly natural query under the circumstances. Had Peter replied in the affirmative no more would have happened to him than had already happened to John. But he saw the power of his Master's enemies, and his imagination included himself in his Master's danger. Peter's fidelity therefore was snapped, and he cowardly denied his Master.

I-40;
xix.
I-16.

Peter's
denial.

No doubt Peter hurried forward thinking to escape further questioning, and confident that the lie had given him security. But he found, as all men find, that the first step downward makes the second step easier. He had gone forward to join the people round the open fire, which the cold night air of the early part of the year necessitated. Probably he had joined in the conversation, and his Galilean origin had been betrayed by his mode of

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John
xviii.
1-40;
xix.
1-16.

speech (St. Mark xiv. 70). At all events the question was again put to him, "Art not thou ALSO one of His disciples?" There was nothing of threatening in the query, it was rather the curiosity of seeing an associate of One Who was the centre of interest, it was nothing more than the curiosity of casual conversation which was seeking information from an expected and first-hand source. But fear again brought infidelity. John was close at hand unharmed, even though he was known to be a disciple of Christ, and yet Peter in answer to a general inquiry basely denied his Master again.

It is not surprising that a third denial took place. Peter continued in the same place warming himself by the fire. The previous conversation had naturally aroused some comment, a kinsman of Malchus, knowing something of the latter's lucky escape from death, came forward to see the supposed associate of the Nazarene. He would of course have a great interest in the man who had nearly killed his relative, and he promptly challenged Peter with having been in the garden with Christ. But if Peter had failed before the perfectly natural queries of a portress and of casual companions, he was not likely to rise to greater heights when the query was put to him in the form of a threat. Visions of impending danger from the friends of Malchus intensified his fears, and again he denied his Master.

It is a saddening spectacle, all the more deplorable in view of Peter's previous fervid assertions of loyalty, and in view also of his Master's position at the moment. Satan had desired to have Peter,

The Arrest and Trial of Jesus

and his faith had failed as Christ had predicted (St. Luke xxii. 31). He had been too fearful of men and not sufficiently thinking of Christ and His power, and hence his terrible fall. His failure, however, was unlike that of Judas. The action of the latter was due to a cankered and mercenary spirit which had overpowered him and had swept him eventually to base treachery. On the other hand, the action of Peter was due to an overweening self-confidence, to the fear of man, and to forgetfulness of the power of the Master he really loved. There was no real personal love of Christ in the heart of Judas, but this was never lacking in the case of Peter. Therefore there was room for repentance so far as Peter was concerned. The look of Christ upon him was enough to reduce him to abject misery (St. Luke xxii. 61, 62) and to send him out into the darkness, heart-broken. It was a despairing man, a man contemptuous of himself who left the courtyard, for he knew that he really loved Christ, and yet he knew he had been utterly false to the Master he followed.

But it was this very fact which gave hope for the future. Our Lord knew His disciple and all his failings (St. Luke xxii. 31, 32), and He was aware that with all his limitations Peter had a love for Him. Therefore it is not without significance that the first appearance of Christ after the Resurrection was to Peter in private (1 Cor. xv. 5). In this private interview the disciple no doubt poured out his repentance and received forgiveness, a forgiveness which was ratified publicly in the presence of the

St. John
xviii.
1-40;
xix.
1-16.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John
xviii. 15-19). disciples on the shores of Galilee (St. John xxi. 15-19).

I-40;

xix.

I-16.

St. John

xviii. 12-14,

19-24, 28-

40; xix.

I-16.

Before

Annas and

Caiaphas.

At the voluntary surrender of Christ, the soldiers and their leaders surrounded Him and bound Him, and the fact that the whole body of them took part in doing so indicates their apprehension, since they had seen our Lord's power in prostrating them and in healing the wounded Malchus. With Christ safely in their midst, however, they hurried off to Annas. The latter had been high priest, but he had been deposed by the Romans, and replaced by his son-in-law, Caiaphas. It is clear that the Levitical law had been interfered with, for a son of the high priest might be a coadjutor with his father during the latter's lifetime, but not a son-in-law. Hence the Jews regarded Annas in the light of head of the Jewish hierarchy, and they therefore took Christ direct to him.

Annas first of all tried to find out something about the number of our Lord's followers, with a view evidently to magnifying the charge of sedition which he had in view. Our Lord's reply to the inquiry both about the disciples and His teaching was very simple. His teaching had been given openly in the Temple, in synagogues, and in other public places, and there were thousands of men who could have given Annas the information he needed on this point. About His disciples He said nothing.

The reply was a rebuff to Annas, and was rewarded by a blow from one of the officers standing near. The blow called forth a gentle rebuke from Christ, the only rebuke which fell from His lips as

The Arrest and Trial of Jesus

He began to experience the rough handling of His enemies. St. John
xviii.

The preliminary trial before Annas had failed of its purpose, and our Lord was forthwith sent bound to Caiaphas. From now onward the latter becomes the prime mover in all the concerted actions against Christ. St. John, it is true, omits all account of the trial before Caiaphas, since the details were already recorded in the other Gospels, but the line of action taken before Pilate makes it clear that the whole series of accusations had been carefully planned at the house of Caiaphas before the Jewish leaders set out for the palace of Pilate. I-40;
xix.
I-16.

When the party arrived at Pilate's residence they refused to go inside the building, but remained in the open air. This refusal to enter is significant. It shows how passion can blind men sometimes to all sense of proportion. These Jews were fearful that there might be some crumbs of unleavened bread in the rooms of the palace, and that should they enter such rooms this might bring defilement on them, in view of the Passover regulations (Exod. xii. 15). They had murder in their hearts, and fear of ritual defilement in their minds. To such strange pass had passion and hatred led them that on the one hand they were attempting judicial murder, and on the other they were fearful of offending God by a possible breach of ritual!

In the open portico of Pilate's palace, therefore, the Jewish leaders put forward their prearranged series of charges against Christ. They first of all practically asked Pilate to condemn our Lord Before
Pilate.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John
xviii.
1-40;
xix.
1-16.

unheard. They wanted him to take it for granted that Christ was worthy of death simply because they themselves had come to that conclusion (*vv.* 29-32).

When Pilate refused to be their catspaw, the Jews then advanced the political charge that Christ had made Himself a king (xviii. 33). This accusation also proved unsuccessful, for Pilate twice deliberately declared that Christ was guiltless of any such charge (xviii. 38; xix. 6). When this proved fruitless the chief priests urged that Christ had blasphemed the Jewish laws by declaring Himself the Son of God, and was therefore guilty of death. Even this brought no sense of criminal guilt to Pilate, but the very opposite (xix. 12).

It was then the Jewish leaders changed their ground, and, instead of resting their case on a formal charge against our Lord, they simply brow-beat the judge. They threatened Pilate that if he let Christ go he would be unfaithful to Cæsar. When their formal accusation of guilt failed, they secured their desire by threatening Pilate with being considered a traitor to the Roman Emperor. The threat was successful, and the brow-beaten Pilate surrendered Christ to the Jews.

Pilate's
unstable
character.

This result is surprising in view of the general reputation of the Romans for even-handed justice, but the reason for it lies in the unstable character of Pilate. His previous record had shown him to be a mixture of strength and weakness. On one occasion he had taken money from the Temple Treasury to build a water channel from the Pools of Solomon, and when a riot threatened in consequence, he

The Arrest and Trial of Jesus

quelled it by introducing disguised soldiers into the crowd. On another occasion he tried to show his own power and his contempt of the Jews by bringing the Roman military standards by night into Jerusalem. On these standards were displayed figures of the Roman emperors as gods. This was considered idolatry by the Jews, and out of deference to this feeling the Romans had kept these standards out of Jerusalem. When, therefore, the Jews learned of Pilate's action they were roused to frenzy. In answer to the tumult Pilate surrounded the Jews with soldiers and threatened the mob with death. But when the Jews persisted in their clamour Pilate gave way and sent the standards back to Caesarea (cf. also St. Luke xiii. 1).

Thus the trial of our Lord could be no isolated fact in the life of Pilate, and his action followed the line which might be expected from his previous career. He starts with a clear enough decision that he will not condemn Christ unheard (*vv.* 29, 30). Then when he questions Christ concerning the political accusation of making himself the King of the Jews he is pulled up sharply by Christ's reference to the kingdom of truth (*v.* 37). "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice," says Christ, and the statement finds an echo in the heart of Pilate. He knows that whatever Christ may be, at all events He is no criminal, and therefore he declares, "I find in Him no fault at all" (*v.* 38).

Now since this was the considered judgment of Pilate we should have expected the trial to end there. Pilate was convinced that Christ was

St. John
xviii.
I-40;
xix.
I-16.

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St. John
xviii.
1-40;
xix.
1-16.

innocent, and it was surely his duty to set Christ free, be the consequences what they may. But that was not Pilate's way. There was the memory of his previous unhappy dealings with the Jews, which the latter also were not likely to forget. There was the thought also that a riot at this time would imperil his already weakened reputation in the eyes of the Emperor. It is this which accounts for the temporising policy which now seeks to secure the release of Christ without offending the Jews.

Therefore he offers to release Christ, in accordance with the custom of giving release to a prisoner at the Passover, a custom which no doubt symbolised Israel's release from Egypt. When this fails he scourges Christ, with all the murderous physical torture it involved. He allows the soldiers, who were not on duty, to mock the stricken Christ by throwing round Him one of their military robes and putting a crown of thorns on Him and deriding Him as King of the Jews. And the tortured Christ he brings before the Jews again, declaring Him innocent, and hoping that His obvious sufferings would melt them to pity.

He is awed for a moment when the Jews clamour that Christ made Himself the Son of God. Visions of what he had read of Greek heathen gods appearing as men came to him, and prompted him to further talk with Christ, and he would still have released Christ after this. But the last cry of the Jews was, "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend," and this cry sealed the matter for Pilate. The Emperor Tiberius was a very suspicious

The Arrest and Trial of Jesus

monarch, and one who considered it unpardonable that Roman governors should allow his authority to be endangered in any way. Pilate's record with the Jews was such that it was certain they would carry their equivocal charge to the Emperor if Christ were freed. Therefore, since his own future was at stake, he would not risk anything further on behalf of Christ. So in spite of his reiterated judgment that Christ was innocent, he surrendered to the clamour of the Jews, and handed Him over to be crucified.

Thus the shadows of Calvary gather round our Lord, and as we view the human instruments (cf. Acts ii. 22, 23) which were leading Him there we arrive at certain conclusions.

One is that no man is wholly evil. Neither Judas Iscariot, nor the Jewish leaders, nor Pilate were monsters of iniquity. There was a time when Judas was aflame with the idea of serving Christ. There was a moment when many of the Jews would gladly have made Christ a king (cf. St. John vi. 15). There was a point when Pilate was conscious of something more than ordinary in the Man who stood before him. Yet these were the people by whom Christ was brought to Calvary.

The reason was that none of them were prepared to face for themselves the true claims of Christ. Judas would have imperilled his life under Christ's leadership if the latter had proclaimed a kingdom of the Jews. But there was no room in his mind for a spiritual kingdom of Christ in the hearts of men. The Jewish leaders would have welcomed a Messianic leadership which recognised their own position of

St. John
xviii.

I-40;

xix.

I-16.

No man
is wholly
evil.

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St. John
xviii.

1-40;

xix.

1-16.

authority in the councils of the nation. But they could not accept a kingdom whose laws were based on the Sermon on the Mount and whose king was the despised Jesus of Nazareth.

Pilate was quickened in conscience as he listened to the claim of a king whose kingdom was one of truth and who was called the Son of God. But he would not give a second thought to Christ if his own future prospects were to be imperilled by Him.

Weakness
plus
malice.

Hence it was moral weakness plus human malice which brought Christ to the Cross. In the case of Judas, disappointed hopes degenerated into an anger which made him a willing tool of the chief priests. Painfully tragic is it that of Judas our Lord could say, "Better for that man if he had never been born."

In the case of the Jews, the anger of rigid-minded ecclesiastics developed into a frenzy of blind fanaticism which denied their Messiah and denied even their nation (xix. 15), in the hope of securing Christ's destruction by Rome.

In the case of Pilate, previous false steps of administration dogged him, the habit of vacillation undermined his moral fibre, and he allowed himself to be the unwilling tool of a people he utterly despised.

Humanly speaking it is a melancholy picture, and a picture whose sombre character is still more heightened by the unfaithfulness of the leading disciple of Christ. Yet as we think of it, there is usually a feeling of contempt for those who

The Arrest and Trial of Jesus

were the means of condemning our Lord, and a conviction that we at all events would never have allowed base motives to blind us with regard to Christ. We are certain we should never have been guilty of sending Christ to the Cross.

St. John
xviii.
1-40;
xix.
1-16.

Thank God there are many people like the "beloved disciple" who would always be faithful to their Master, however threatening the circumstances. But it is well not to overlook the fact that even this very day men can "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh" (Heb. vi. 6). They can do so by unfaithful lives, they do it when their actions give ocular proof that they are not living as Christ taught us to live. It is a solemn thought that professing Christians can, by their unfaithfulness, give Christ again some of the anguish He suffered from Pilate and the Jews. May it never be said of us that we can be numbered amongst those who "crucify the Son of God in their own persons and hold Him up to obloquy" (Moffat's translation).

PRAYER

O Almighty Saviour, Who hast taught us by Thine example to bear mocking and evil-speaking, grant that we may never be ashamed of Thee and of Thy service. Grant that the fear of Thee may deliver us from all the sinful fear of man, so that we may never be turned aside from doing what is right, either by the violence of the wicked or through their false enticements. Give us grace manfully to confess Thee before men, that Thou mayst acknowledge us for Thine own when Thou shalt come to judge the world in righteousness. And to Thee, O Lord, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*—(E. HAWKINS.)

XV

THE CROSS OF CALVARY

And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called *the place* of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha : Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

And Pilate wrote a title, and put *it* on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews : for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city : and it was written in Hebrew, *and* Greek, *and* Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews ; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part ; and also *his* coat : now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be : that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son ! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother ! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own *home*.

After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar : and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put *it* upon hyssop, and put *it* to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished : and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath

The Cross of Calvary

day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs : But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true : and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

And after this Joseph of Arimathæa, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus : and Pilate gave *him* leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden ; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day ; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.—
ST. JOHN XIX. 17-42.

THE spiritual blindness of the leaders of the Jews, St. John together with the moral weakness of Pilate, had xix. now brought Christ face to face with the Cross. 17-42. From the human standpoint it is a sorry story we Verses have now to consider, but a story which in its eternal 17-24. significance transcends everything else which the world has known or is likely to know.

As soon as Pilate had pronounced sentence of death, our Lord was delivered to the Jewish leaders, who directed the Roman soldiers in carrying out the task of crucifixion. Christ therefore set out bearing His own cross, as was customary, until He collapsed through its weight and through the strain of His

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John previous sufferings, when Simon of Cyrene was
xix. called on to carry it for Him (St. Luke xxii. 26; St.
17-42. Mark xv. 21).

The place of execution to which they went was outside the city. This was in accord with the original Mosaic custom of stoning offenders outside the camp (Lev. xxiv. 14; Num. xv. 35), a practice which had continued throughout their later history (1 Kings xxi. 13; Acts vii. 58). So Christ as an ordinary criminal "suffered without the gate" (Heb. xiii. 12).

The Romans, moreover, used to carry out their executions in very public places, where many people could see them. So in this case they chose an elevated place on a public road, where many passers-by would see what was going on (cf. St. Matt. xxvii. 39).

Neither here nor elsewhere does the gospel story stress the physical suffering inseparable from the crucifixion. The actual nailing of the hands and feet to the cross as it lay on the ground, the excruciating agony as the cross with its living burden was raised to an upright position, these and such-like facts are never emphasised nor even referred to. The physical sufferings are there, however, and should not be lost sight of by us.

St. John therefore is content to record that "they crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst." The fact that the Eternal Son of God allowed Himself to suffer such a humiliating death is the thing which the Apostle emphasises. St. Luke, however, tells us that the

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“two other” who were crucified with Christ were malefactors (St. Luke xxiii. 32). It was one of the crowning insults of the Jews that they should arrange to place Him between two criminals. They had repudiated Him, and now they stigmatised Him when He was in their hands by giving Him the place of distinction amongst criminals in His last hours (cf. Isa. liii. 12).

**St. John
xix.
17-42.**

But while the Jews heaped insult upon Christ in this way, Pilate in his turn insulted the Jews by the title he placed upon the cross. It was customary when a man was condemned to be crucified to march him in procession through the more crowded thoroughfares. A herald preceded him calling out the condemned man's crime, or holding aloft a placard telling of his crime. Sometimes the placard was hung about the neck of the condemned man as he proceeded to the place of execution. In any case the placard was fixed to the cross.

**The title on
the cross.**

Pilate therefore wrote on the placard for the cross, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” It was the bitter irony of the thwarted Roman ruler who galled the Jews by proclaiming the supposed malefactor as their King. The Jews felt the insult, and the chief priests demanded that the wording should be altered to the fact that Christ SAID He was King of the Jews. But there was nothing here that Pilate need fear from the Jews, and with the stubborn perversity of his nature he refused to alter the wording. He wrote better than he knew, however, for he proclaimed in the tongue of the Hebrews, of the Greek language used by all civilised peoples, of

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St. John the Roman people who dominated the world, that
xix. Christ was indeed the King of His people Israel.

17-42. Pilate was an unconscious prophet just as much as
Pilate an Caiaphas had been (cf. xi. 51).
unconscious

prophet.

The Roman law awarded the clothing of the crucified to the soldiers responsible for the execution. The soldiers therefore proceeded to divide among themselves the garments such as caps, girdles and outer clothing of Christ and the malefactors, together with the coats of the latter. The coat of Christ, however, met with a different fate. It was evidently too valuable to go into one of the shares of the four soldiers, for it was woven throughout; and therefore they cast lots for it.

The woven coat was the garment of the priests, the garment which is called an ephod in Exodus xxviii. 31. So this particular point which St. John mentions shows us that he sees Christ as the great High Priest on the Cross bearing the sins of men, just as he also sees Him as the Lord's Anointed fulfilling the prophecies which the Psalmist foretold (Ps. xxii. 18).

Verses
25-27.

St. John does not give a full account of the incidents of the Crucifixion. He chooses his own details to bring out the main points he has in view, or he mentions personal matters in which he is directly concerned. So he now tells us that there were standing by the cross of Christ His mother, her sister Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. The cross was only raised a few inches above the ground, so that our Lord could look into the eyes of those who had remained with Him,

The Cross of Calvary

faithful to the end. In spite of the agony He was suffering, Christ's love for the Virgin Mary prompted Him to a last thought for her future well-being. "Woman," He said, and the word has nothing of aloofness, but of tender courtesy, "behold thy son." Then looking towards St. John He said, "Behold thy mother."

St. John
xix.

17-42.

Our Lord
and His
mother.

Some writers have thought that in so doing our Lord was in effect declaring that all earthly relationships were now at an end, and that His relationship as man with the Virgin Mary His mother was now finished. It may be so, but the natural interpretation of the incident is that Christ entrusted the care of the mother who gave Him earthly form to the disciple who loved Him best. True it is that our Lord's brethren learned to believe in Him later (Acts i. 14), and it may be also that St. John as a nephew of the Virgin Mary was as closely related to her as were Christ's brethren, if the latter were the children of Joseph by another marriage. The simple fact remains that one of our Lord's last thoughts prompts Him to an act of loving care in committing His mother to St. John. The latter had the means to provide for her (cf. St. Mark i. 20), and so he took her to his own home.

St. John then draws attention to the fact that the whole of the Scriptural predictions of the Messiah with regard to His suffering were now complete, and he goes on to show that Christ fulfilled further prophecy when He exclaimed, "I thirst" (cf. Ps. lxxix. 21). In this again He fulfilled the Scriptural prediction of what the servant of God should suffer.

Verses
28-30.

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St. John
xix.
17-42.

It should be borne in mind that in the early stages of His suffering on the cross our Lord had refused the stupefying drink which was offered Him (St. Matt. xxvii. 34; St. Mark xv. 23). This drink of "gall" or "myrrh" was a primitive form of anæsthetic which dulled the senses, and it seems to have been customary to supply this drink to all who were crucified. Our Lord, however, had refused it. He had no wish to escape any physical suffering, and He had no desire to sleep away into death. On the contrary, He wished to bear everything with unclouded brain, and He wanted to face death as a Conqueror, and not as a drugged Victim.

The cry "I thirst," therefore, was simply torn from Him by His suffering, and in response to His cry a drink of the sour wine of the soldiers was handed up to Him. In this way His thirst was assuaged, and His brain was kept clear to the end.

"It is
finished."

It was thus, in full possession of His faculties, that Christ uttered the words "It is finished." To those standing by, the exclamation would simply mean that His sufferings were ended, but to us who are privileged to have the New Testament, we know assuredly that Christ meant His work of redemption was now finished. He "came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15), and the salvation was accomplished by the fact that "He gave His life a ransom for many" (St. Matt. xx. 28). The life He lived is important, and no words can adequately describe all that is meant by the fact that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world. But when we have learned all we can learn from the life of Christ,

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and when we have been inspired by His perfect **St. John** example, we come back to the fact that the purpose **xix.** of His life was **Redemption**, and He tells us that **17-42.** Redemption is to be procured by the fact that "He gave His life a ransom for many."

Thus St. Peter learned that his Master "bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter ii. 24), and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews declared that Christ "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever" (x. 12). They, like the other disciples, knew that on the Cross of Calvary the work of Redemption was completed, and it was with full knowledge of this fact that Christ our Redeemer truly said, "It is finished."

Significantly enough does St. John therefore add, "and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." The Apostle does not say that Christ died, and he avoids any expression which might indicate that death had overcome Christ. Rather he wants us to understand that Christ "gave up" His life, and that it was a voluntary surrender to death. His voluntary death was a true exhibition of His own words that "no man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself" (x. 18). When His work of Redemption was finished, He gave up His earthly life.

During the last moments of Christ, the Jews had **Verses** been anxious to hasten the death of those who were **31-37.** hanging on the cross. The next day was the "first day of unleavened bread," which happened to coincide also with the Sabbath day, and because of this the Jewish law insisted that the bodies of

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John criminals should be removed before nightfall (Deut. **xix.** xxi. 23). Those who were crucified survived as a rule for about twelve hours, though some men were known to have lived on until the third day. In order, however, to avoid any violation of the Mosaic law the Jews asked Pilate that the legs of the crucified might be broken, so that their death should be hastened and their bodies then removed from sight. It was a curious working of the minds of the Jewish leaders that they should again be so particular about the observance of the letter of the Law at a time when they were gloating over the successful judicial murder they had brought about (cf. xviii. 28).

In accordance with their request the Roman soldiers broke the legs of the two malefactors, but when they came to Christ they discovered that He was already dead (cf. St. Mark xv. 44). One of the soldiers, however, acting no doubt from motives of prudence, made doubly sure of Christ's death by piercing His side with a spear. But to the amazement of St. John, out from the side of the dead Christ there came blood and water.

This extraordinary phenomenon made a great impression upon St. John, as is seen by his emphatic affirmation in verse 35 with regard to it. The interpretation of it has brought many explanations, but of these various explanations we can at least say this. First of all, that since water and blood do not flow from the dead bodies of ordinary humanity there is a fact here outside of ordinary human experience. Our Lord was undoubtedly

**Blood and
water.**

The Cross of Calvary

dead, for there is no gainsaying the evidence of the Gospels. Yet from His dead body there came an element which is characteristic only of life. Since this is the case, then it is possible and probable that His body was not going the way of ordinary bodies, but was already entering upon the glorification proper to the spiritual body of the heavenly state (1 Cor. xv. 44).

St. John
xix.
17-42.

St. John himself offers no explanation of the phenomenon, but he undoubtedly saw in it a symbol or sign of redemption. In his other writings he is constantly referring to "the blood" that cleanses and redeems (cf. 1 John i. 7; v. 6; Rev. i. 5; v. 9; vii. 14; xii. 11), and in one place he speaks of Christ as "He that came by water and blood" (1 John v. 6). Putting everything together it amounts to this, that St. John saw Christ as the Eternal Son of God in human flesh, he saw Him die the felon's death, he saw the persistence of life even in death, and he taught men later that the crucified Christ gives redemption from sin and cleansing from sin, by His blood shed on Calvary. Life from death—such is the teaching of St. John.

It is in line with this truth that St. John insists on the fulfilment of Scripture, when Christ was pierced instead of having His bones broken. The one prophecy is referred to in Exodus xii. 46 and Numbers ix. 12, which forbade the breaking of a bone of the paschal lamb. The other refers to Zechariah xii. 10, which is a lament of Jerusalem over the "piercing" or slaying of the good shepherd. In such manner also did Christ the Paschal Lamb of

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St. John God and the Good Shepherd of Israel lay down His
xix. life to redeem His people.

17-42.

Verses

38-42.

**Joseph of
Arimathea.**

One other event only is now described by St. John, and that is the manner in which the body of Christ was disposed of. It was customary to get rid of the bodies of criminals in summary fashion by burying them in pits (cf. Josh. viii. 29; 1 Kings xiii. 29), but it was quite easy for the friends of the condemned to purchase from the Governor the privilege of burial. At this moment, therefore, Joseph of Arimathea came forward to ask leave to bury the body of Christ. He possessed a tomb which was "nigh at hand," and it was essential, moreover, that the burial should take place before 6 p.m., when the Passover day began. Pilate made no demur, and asked for no payment, but freely gave him leave without making any difficulty.

Encouraged by the action of Joseph, Nicodemus also came forward and offered rich abundance of spices with which to embalm the body of Christ. Thus owing to the intervention of these two men the body of Christ was reverently laid in the tomb.

The boldness of the action of these two men is striking. Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin, and was looking for the kingdom of God (St. Mark xv. 43). There was nothing robust about his belief, however; he was one of those Jewish leaders whose faith in Christ was a secret faith (cf. vii. 13; xii. 42), and even here he acted "secretly for fear of the Jews." And yet, even in this dark hour, he dares to show his attachment to Christ.

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Nicodemus also had shown but a halting faith in **St. John** Christ (cf. vii. 50, 51), yet when the disciples were **xix.** found wanting, he dared to join with Joseph in the **17-42.** last sad rites for the One Who had taught him. Is it possible that Nicodemus recognised in the crucified Christ the Son of Man who was to be lifted up? Can we say that the words of our Lord about the brazen serpent typifying Himself had suddenly opened the eyes of Nicodemus to the full truth about Christ (cf. iii. 14)? There is no evidence to show this, nor are there any indications to prove that these two men differed from the other disciples in expecting the resurrection of Christ. All that we can say is that these two faltering disciples came forward at the darkest moment to confess by their action their faith in Christ.

Such is the story of the Crucifixion and some of its attendant circumstances, as given by St. John. Like all else of this Gospel it is a carefully chosen narrative of some only of the things that happened at the Crucifixion, and our consideration of the narrative has already shown us what impressed St. John so much.

First of all he sees how completely Christ was **The fulfil-** fulfilling all that had been predicted of the suffering **ment of** Messiah. The parting of His garments (v. 24), the **prophecy.** cry of thirst (v. 28), the reference to the fact that His bones were not broken and that His side was pierced (vv. 36, 37), these show us how St. John saw the scriptural predictions fulfilled to the very letter. In the divine plan for the redemption of man there

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St. John had been many events foretold, and St. John in the
xix. references he gives shows us his appreciation of the
17-42. fact that Christ fulfilled them.

A voluntary sufferer. Then we are reminded again of the voluntariness of our Lord's sufferings on Calvary. This had been made plain enough in the Garden of Gethsemane. Our Lord Himself had emphasised it also when He stood before Pilate. And upon the Cross itself this fact was made very plain. Christ need not have died. On the Mount of Transfiguration when the gates of Heaven so to speak were open, He might have stepped from earth to heaven. There was no need why He should have died the death of mortal men unless He wished. The only reason which impelled Him to suffer and die was our Redemption. For this reason He came into the world, and when His hour was come He went freely and willingly to the Cross and to death. But there was no compulsion about it. The only thing which drove Him was love for the world He came to save, and because of His love He freely and voluntarily gave Himself to death.

It is because of this that St. John tells us that the work of Redemption is "finished." When Christ hung on the Cross for the sins of men; when He, the Eternal Son of the Living God, condescended to be accursed for sinful humanity and to die the death of a felon, the work of Redemption was completed and perfected. Christ could do no more; the only thing afterwards was to apply the work of Redemption, but the actual work of Redemption was "finished" on Calvary.

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It is on this latter truth that our minds and hearts should rest. The fact of sin is so evident for all of us. Men may give it another name and call it "the imperfection of our human nature," "the limitations of humanity," "baser instincts," and the like; but the fact remains that "all have sinned." We want to get rid of our sin, we long to rid ourselves of the burden that makes us feel unworthy of God and unfit for His Presence. There is one way and one way only by which the burden of sin can be effectively removed, and that way Christ offers us. "He bore our sins in His own body up to the tree" of Calvary, and the burden of our sins can be removed by Him Who bore them. "If we confess our sins (to Him) He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If in sincere and honest repentance we come to Him for forgiveness of sins, we shall have His forgiveness, because the Gospel record tells us so. St. John
xix.
17-42.

And not only will He redeem us from the sins of the past, but He will help us also in the present. "The blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin," says St. John (1 John i. 7). Christ, Who redeems from the past, also helps in the present. He cleanses from the power of sin. He gives us new ideals instead of the older and baser ideas; He gives us purer motives and better ambitions; He fills us with the longing to make His kingdom a reality, and He inspires us to do for our fellow-men what He Himself would have done for them. He cleanses us by the consciousness of His own living Presence, He fills us with the sense of His every-

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St. John present nearness, and He lifts us up above the sordid-
xix. ness of petty motives. The daily "cleansing"
17-42. comes from a continual walk in the light of Christ's Presence, and it makes us more like the Master with Whom we keep company.

Man may argue about theories of the Atonement, but the fact of Atonement is gloriously true. The man who is content to accept Christ at His word, and to receive His promised forgiveness, knows in himself the truth of what Christ offers. He joins the countless throng of men and women who can truthfully say from their own experience, we "rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have now received the atonement" (Rom. v. 11).

PRAYER

"Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

O Saviour of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ, merciful and loving, Whose presence in the world shows us Thy thought and care for all mankind: We humbly thank Thee for Thine inestimable love, which brought Thee even to the shameful cross, where Thou didst bear the sins of all men: We praise Thee for the knowledge that Thou hast wrought redemption for us; help us by faith to appropriate Thy finished work on Calvary; take away the burden of our sin; remove from us the power of sin, so that we may ever live in accordance with Thy holy will: We ask it for the glory of Thy Name. *Amen.*—(T. W. G.)

XVI

THE EMPTY TOMB

The first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together : and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, *and looking in*, saw the linen clothes lying ; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie. And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping : and as she wept, she stooped down, *and looked* into the sepulchre. And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her. Woman, why weepest thou ? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou ? whom seekest thou ? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni ; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not ; for I am not yet ascended to my Father : but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father ;

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and to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* he had spoken these things unto her.—ST. JOHN XX. 1-18.

St. John xx. 1-18. THERE is nothing more striking in the history of Christianity than the difference between the attitude of the disciples on the day of the crucifixion and their attitude some six or seven weeks later. On the day of the crucifixion they were a scattered and discredited band, they were fearful of the Jews, and faithless, for the most part, to their Master. Their hopes had been blighted by the death of Christ. The lament of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus—"We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel" (St. Luke xxiv. 21)—was merely an echo of what all the disciples felt, for all the hopes they had had seemed buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

Some few weeks later, however, the disciples have changed out of all recognition. They can boldly declare to the Jews, "ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you" (Acts iii. 14); they are able to say to the Jewish leaders themselves, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree" (Acts v. 30); and when the exasperated Sanhedrin threatened them and commanded them to stop preaching, the reply they get is "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts v. 29).

The main reason for this change of bearing lies in one fact, namely, that Christ had risen from the dead. It was this which completely transformed the disciples, and which changed them from timorous

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and faithless followers of Christ into the devoted **St. John** band who turned the world upside down (cf. Acts **xx. 1-18.** i. 22; ii. 31, 32; iii. 15, etc.).

The narrative of St. John's Gospel enables us to **Verses** feel something of the despair which the death of **1-10.** Christ had brought to the disciples. Mary Magdalene, evidently in company with other women (cf. "We know not . . ." v. 2, and St. Luke xxiv. 10), had set out for the sepulchre early, on the first day of the week. They had evidently determined in their own mind to complete the work of embalming, since they must have been ignorant of the munificent gift of Nicodemus for the purpose (xix. 39).

They arrived somewhere between the hours of three and six in the morning, before it was fully light; but when they drew near, Mary Magdalene noticed that the stone had been removed from the door of the sepulchre. Leaving the other women at the sepulchre, Mary hurried back to Jerusalem to tell Peter and John that the Body of Christ had been removed.

The thought that Mary should lament and weep because the Body of Christ was gone seems ironical to us who know the sequel. Rather should Mary have wept if Christ's Body had still lain in the tomb. But since the Resurrection was not in her mind she could merely think of one thing: she was thinking only of the disappearance of the Body of her Lord (cf. v. 13), and her inability therefore to pay the last rites which love prompted.

As soon as they were informed, Peter and John hurried off together to investigate the astounding

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St. John news they had heard. John, as the younger man,
xx. 1-18. and hurried by his own feelings of love, beat his companion for speed and arrived first at the sepulchre; but whether it was from feelings of reverence for the resting-place of the One he loved, he did not cross the threshold. When Peter arrived, however, with his characteristic directness and impetuosity he at once went into the sepulchre, and saw the linen clothes and the napkin lying carefully arranged. The orderly arrangement of the linen clothes and the napkin seems to have struck the mind of St. John when he entered the sepulchre, and he obviously felt that it was not the act of friends or foes who had taken away the Body of Christ. The Greek verb for "saw" in verse 5 is different from that in verse 8. In the case of Peter it implies that he merely "looked upon" the linen clothes, but in the case of John it implies that he "looked upon" and "saw the significance of" the linen clothes lying as they were. The empty tomb and the arrangement of the clothes brought home to St. John, but not to St. Peter, that Christ had risen from the dead. Peter needed a direct personal manifestation from Christ before he realised the truth (St. Luke xxiv. 34), for he had not the spiritual perception of his colleague.

Why did not the disciples expect the Lord's Resurrection?

That the disciples one and all should not have looked for Christ's Resurrection seems extraordinary. The chief priests had not forgotten our Lord's prediction of His Resurrection (St. Matt. xxvii. 63), and the dullness of the apprehension of the disciples is therefore all the more amazing. Certainly some of

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our Lord's predictions had been couched in mysterious language (cf. ii. 19; x. 18), and the meaning **St. John xx. 1-18.** may have been hidden from the disciples (cf. St. Luke ix. 45), but the implications of such Old Testament prophecies as Psalm xvi. 10 should have been clear enough to those who had been continually taught by Christ. The fact remains that the shock of the Crucifixion seems for the time being to have paralysed the minds of the disciples, and there was no place for the Resurrection in their thought. The foreshadowing of the coming change, however, takes place when St. John entered the sepulchre, for he first, among the disciples, believed that his Master was risen, even before he had seen Him in Person.

After the striking experience, which produced **Verses 11-18.** such different results to each of them, Peter and John returned back to their quarters in Jerusalem. They evidently returned a different way from that by which they came, for they did not encounter Mary Magdalene to tell her their experiences.

Mary, however, returned to the sepulchre, absorbed in grief for the death of Christ and because of the disappearance of His Body; and as she looked into the tomb she was aware of the presence of two angels. We must rid ourselves of the conventional idea of angels as being two-winged men, a conception not that of Scripture. St. John describes them as "two angels in white," whilst St. Luke refers to them as "two men . . . in shining garments" (xxiv. 4). Nothing further is said of them than

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St. John xx. 1-18. this. But whether they had about them the air of heavenly visitants or not made no difference to Mary. She was obsessed with one fact, the death of Christ and the disappearance of His Body, and her only cry is, "I know not where they have laid Him." It never seems to have occurred to her that Christ's Body was not held by death, and that the presence of the angels might be associated with Christ's Resurrective life. Personal grief had blinded her to our Lord's teaching, and the hope of immortality was obscured by her immediate sense of loss.

It was thus a broken-hearted woman who turned away from the angels, and as she went from the sepulchre, she saw someone who at that early hour she naturally thought would be the gardener engaged in his ordinary duties. Hurrying towards the supposed gardener she hears him repeat the question of the angels, "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?"

Why did
Mary not
recognise
the risen
Lord?

It seems amazing to us that Mary did not at this moment recognise Christ as He spoke to her. But we must not overlook the fact that the two disciples, on the road to Emmaus that same day did not recognise our Lord even though He conversed with them for a long time (St. Luke xxiv. 15, 16). The Evangelists also tell us of Christ being "manifested in another form" (St. Mark xvi. 12), and of the failure of the disciples to recognise Christ even later (St. John xxi. 4). Hence Mary's failure to recognise her Master was only on a par with the failure of the disciples. Their spiritual perception

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was not fully awakened, quite apart from any **St. John** question whether Christ had purposely cloaked His **xx. 1-18.** appearance.

So Mary, obsessed with her grief, can think of only one thing, *i.e.* where is the dead Body of her Master, and to the supposed gardener she cries, "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." But to the amazement of the woman the voice of the stranger changes, and she hears the familiar tones of her Master saying "Mary." The whole personality of a man can be put in his voice, and Mary knew it was her Saviour, the One Who had rescued her from the power of evil, Who uttered her name. Bewildered and amazed she flung herself at His feet, and clasped Him as she uttered the one word "Rabboni" or "Teacher." The Revised Version mentions that she spoke in Hebrew, or more exactly in the Aramaic dialect which Christ and His disciples used. So she just breathes out the one word "Teacher" in the old way, and then remains speechless as she clings to Him.

It is not without significance that Mary's greeting of Christ is "Teacher." It is the old familiar title with which she greets Him, and the fact that she does so indicates more than one thing. It shows us first of all that she is living in the past, and that she is simply trying to restore or recapture the old position of Teacher and disciple. And more than this. There is no conception here of Divinity, no appreciation of the fact that the Teacher had demonstrated by His mastery over death that He

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St. John xx. 1-18. was God, One with the Eternal Father, the Maker and Giver of life. There is not here the insight which Thomas was to show later. The explanation seems to be that Mary's grief had so overwhelmed her that when she realised Christ was there, she could think of that fact and that only. And so she would keep Him there, the Teacher, and she herself one of His disciples.

“Do not keep clinging to me.”

This explanation enables us to understand our Lord's words recorded in verse 17. The Authorised Version gives the first sentence as “Touch me not,” but the marginal reading of the Revised Version gives the more exact rendering as “Take not hold on Me.” What our Lord deprecated was not that Mary should TOUCH Him. He invited Thomas to touch Him, a little later on (v. 27), just as He invited all the disciples to do so on another occasion (St. Luke xxiv. 39), whilst St. Matthew tells us that our Lord permitted the women to hold Him by the feet (St. Matt. xxviii. 9). Mary Magdalene, however, was clinging, evidently to His feet, with an intensity which gives one to suppose that in the revulsion of feeling which had overtaken her she was inclined to prolong unduly her act of adoration.

The prohibition, moreover, is associated with the words “for I am not yet ascended to My Father.” Many writers and commentators in dealing with these words have assumed that our Lord forbade Mary Magdalene to touch Him at all because He was not yet ascended to the Father. They then go on to infer that our Lord meant the time for physical touch had gone, and that after He had ascended

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there would be a continuous spiritual communion **St. John** to replace the physical touch. There is undoubtedly **xx. 1-18.** an important truth in this statement, but it loses sight of the two things mentioned before, viz. that Christ did invite His disciples to touch Him and permitted the women to do so, whilst our Lord's words also were "Hold not," and not "Touch not."

The plain translation of the phrase therefore is, "Do not keep clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father." Our Lord is thus saying in effect, "Do not keep on clinging to My feet as though you are afraid to lose Me; this is not the only time you will see Me, for the hour has not yet come when I am to ascend to My Father." Christ thus gives her to understand that there will be opportunities for her to see Him again before He ascends, and that there is no need, therefore, for her to cling to Him as though this was the only occasion she should see Him.

This explanation, moreover, becomes fairly obvious if we consider the next words, "but go to My brethren." Our Lord has in mind the disciples who have not seen Him and who do not know that He is risen. There was a plain duty awaiting Mary. Instead of lingering there in adoration, her duty was to go to the disciples and tell them the great news that the Master was alive.

The burden of the message she is commissioned to give to the disciples is, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." **unto My Father."** There is a great diversity of opinion about the

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St. John xx. 1-18. meaning of the first two words, just as there is concerning the first part of verse 17. Some would infer that our Lord meant, "I am ascending," in the sense that He was repeatedly ascending to the Father during the days between the Resurrection and His final Ascension. It is impossible to dogmatise in a realm of which no human being has knowledge. So far as we can see there was nothing to prevent Christ ascending continually to the Father during these forty days, whilst the conditions of His glorified body made such action possible.

Our Lord's words to Mary Magdalene, however, had been "I HAVE NOT yet ascended to My Father." This clearly implies one definite act of Ascension, and precludes the idea of a number of Ascensions. The words "I ascend" therefore suggest that the process of Ascension has begun in the sense that Christ is preparing for it, whether it be by the continual glorification of His spiritual body which assumes different forms during the forty days (cf. St. Mark xvi. 12), or whether it be that He is waiting until the eyes of the disciples are open to the truth which He now teaches them (cf. St. Luke xxiv. 44-47). We can but suggest and not dogmatise.

Thus Mary is bidden to rouse herself and to hurry off to the disciples with the good news that Christ was risen. It is not without interest to notice that "Brethren." the risen Christ calls His disciples "brethren" (v. 17). He had called them "friends" in His last talk with them in the Upper Room (xv. 15), but that title of distinction is now surpassed. With the grave passed and the victory over sin accomplished,

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they are elevated to the rank of being "joint-heirs **St. John** with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17) of the Kingdom of **xx. 1-18.** God. Very striking is it to think that men like the disciples with all their obvious limitations, with their faithlessness to Christ so recently demonstrated, should have been designated "brethren" by our Lord. But it is only another illustration of the unfailing love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

At this stage we can pause in our consideration of St. John's narrative to reflect on some points which these verses suggest.

First of all there is the great fact of the Resur- **The fact of the Resur-**
rection itself. There is something here which is **rection.**
out of the range of all human experience. It is true that Lazarus had been raised from the dead by Christ, just as the daughter of Jairus and the Widow's son at Nain had been; but these three people died again. Our Lord, however, rose from the dead, and never died again. It is no wonder that this abnormal fact is staggering to man, and that very often he is slow to believe it. It is not surprising, therefore, that men have proved incredulous and have tried to explain it away. For the most part the explanations have been based on the idea that the disciples THOUGHT their Master was going to rise again and that their imagination did the rest. But if our consideration has shown us anything, it has revealed that the disciples had no clear faith in the Resurrection, and that their hopes had perished when Christ died on Calvary. St. John's story in these eighteen verses is just a

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St. John transcript from life. It is a plain unvarnished
xx. 1-18. narrative which bears on its face the impress of
A trans- truth. A despairing grief-stricken woman, two
cript from leading disciples, and the three of them unexpectant
life. of a Resurrection; the evidence of the empty tomb
bringing conviction to one disciple, the appearance
of Christ bringing conviction to the woman—this is
the matter-of-fact story. And it is just the simple
statement of fact which brings home to us the truth
that Christ rose from the dead.

**Results of
the Resur-
rection.**

Then there are the great truths which follow from the Resurrection. We think first of all of our Lord Himself. St. Paul says that Christ “was declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. i. 4). He says in effect that the Resurrection adds the seal of truth to all that our Lord said about Himself. His statements about being One with the Eternal Father; His offer of eternal life and of the forgiveness of sins; His claim to satisfy all the spiritual needs of man; in short everything He said and claimed for Himself is attested by the Resurrection.

Then there naturally follows from this what the Resurrection means to ourselves. It guarantees the freedom from condemnation of all who put their faith in Christ and in His redemptive work. St. Paul says that Christ “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. iv. 25). He also adds in Romans x. 9, “that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” The Resur-

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rection therefore places it beyond all possibility of St. John doubt that Christ's work of redemption has been **xx. 1-18.** fully accepted by the Father, and that the fruits of redemption are now available for all who put their trust in Him.

Allied with this is the assurance of resurrection life for the believer. Before the grave of Lazarus Christ had declared Himself the Author and Giver of unending life when He said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." His restoration of Lazarus proved this, but His own Resurrection demonstrated this even more emphatically. Because of this St. Paul could say, "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept"; and that "in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. xv. 20, 22). And it is because he had entered into the same experience that St. Peter could utter this paeon of praise, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter i. 3, 4, R.V.).

With these great and glorious hopes we can look back in thankfulness to that first Easter Day. We see Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene and addressing her by name, and it reassures us as we realise

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St. John that He knows and speaks to an individual beyond
xx. 1-18. the grave. We think of the sorrow of Mary Magdalene that early morning, and we know how that sorrow is typical of humanity which knows not the Resurrection truth about Jesus. But among the first words uttered by our Master on that first Easter Day is the word "Rejoice," for such is the literal translation of our Lord's message to the woman whom He met that morning (St. Matt. xxviii. 9). That Resurrection Joy can be the experience of all who surrender themselves to the Saviour Who died and rose again for them, and they can echo the words of St. Paul, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory (over death) through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. xv. 57).

PRAYERS

O Gracious Lord, Who as at this time didst raise Thy Son Jesus Christ with power from the grave, raise us up, we beseech Thee, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Revive our faith, and make us followers of Him Who hath taken away "the sin of the world: Who by His death hath destroyed death, and by His rising to life again hath restored to us everlasting life." Hear us, O merciful Father, we pray Thee, for the sake of our risen Saviour, to Whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*—(BISHOP W. BOYD CARPENTER.)

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make (us) perfect in every good work to do His will, working in (us) that which is well pleasing in His sight; through Jesus Christ: to Whom be glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*"—(Ep. to the Hebrews xiii. 20, 21.)

XVII

THE UPPER ROOM APPEAR- ANCES OF CHRIST

Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them *his* hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you : as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on *them* and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost : Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them : *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side : and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed ; blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book : But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God : and that believing ye might have life through *his* name.

—ST. JOHN XX. 19-31.

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St. John In the striking events which took place on the first
xx. Easter morning the Eleven disciples had no place.
19-31. After the arrest of their Master they all "forsook Him and fled," and the fear which had gripped them was only intensified by our Lord's subsequent crucifixion. That they ran away from Jerusalem is unlikely, but at the same time it seems clear that they were not assembled together in one home. Peter and John were probably living together or in adjacent places, since they received the message of Mary Magdalene together, but the remainder were evidently scattered in and about the city in careful seclusion, if not in hiding.

Hence it is not one of the Eleven who becomes the first herald of the Resurrection. The first person commissioned to proclaim the Resurrection is a woman, Mary Magdalene; and it is a woman who is directed by Christ Himself to proclaim it, and to proclaim it to the Eleven and to the rest of the disciples.

Wherever the Eleven and the rest of the disciples may have been on that Easter morning, it would not be long before rumours of what had happened would spread amongst them. The rumours would come from many quarters. There would be the report from the women about the empty tomb and the message of the angels (St. Luke xxiv. 1-10), and to this would be added the impressions of Peter and John about Christ's Body being missing. Then a little later the news would spread that Christ was risen and had appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden, and we can imagine the growing wonder

Upper Room Appearances of Christ

and excitement when the word flew round that **St. John** Peter had seen the Risen Master (St. Luke xxiv. 34). **xx.**

It was not that they joyfully accepted the reports, **19-31.** for their hearts were too full of bitter disappointment for that. They were not credulous and ready to believe, and even to the Eleven the reports which were first received "seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not" (St. Luke xxiv. 11).

The reports, however, would have the inevitable result of bringing most of the disciples together, so that eventually a number of Christ's followers, together with the Eleven, found themselves in Jerusalem (St. Luke xxiv. 33), and evidently in the Upper Room, which was a kind of headquarters (cf. St. John xiii.; Acts i. 13). We can imagine the thrill of expectation, and of hope clouded with a pessimism which refused to be shaken off. The atmosphere would be further charged with a more optimistic feeling when the two disciples returned from Emmaus to tell their wondrous news, and then to crown all comes Mary Magdalene commissioned by Christ to tell them that He was risen. It must have been a tumultuous crowd, swayed by mingled feelings of fear and hope, almost afraid to believe the good news, which thronged that room throughout the day.

Towards the evening they were still there. The doors were carefully fastened to exclude unauthorised intruders. The fear of the Jews was now a very real thing, since the passions of the mob had been running so high, and the followers of Christ were

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St. John already learning that if the world hated Him, it
xx. would hate His followers also (cf. xv. 18). There-
19-31. fore they had to take precautions now for their personal safety.

It was thus while they were gathered together in this secluded manner that "Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." The expression "Jesus came" does not imply that Christ suddenly appeared in the centre of the people, or that one moment He was not there and another moment He was in their midst. It rather implies that He passed through the obstacle of closed doors and progressed forward until He was in the midst of His old followers.

The appearance of their Master had the very opposite effect on the disciples to that which we should have supposed. "They were terrified and affrighted" at the appearance of Christ, and their fear was due to the fact that they "supposed that they had seen a spirit" (St. Luke xxiv. 37)—so little were they ready even then to believe in, and to welcome, His Resurrection. But in their fear they heard the familiar voice of their Master say, "Peace be unto you." The salutation was a common Eastern form of greeting, but it would have the effect of reassuring the disciples for more than one reason. It was their Master, Whose voice they now recognised, Who uttered the words. The salutation, moreover, would carry their thoughts back to the time, but a few days before, when in that very room, and from the same lips, the Eleven had heard the words, "My peace I give unto you" (xiv. 27). So

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the disciples would begin to waken more fully to the truth. St. John
xx.

But there was more to follow. There was evidently a slight pause whilst the Master allowed His followers to compose themselves as they gazed upon Him, and whilst the truth that He was really there gripped their minds. Then St. John says, "And when He had so said, He shewed unto them His hands and His side." The significance of this statement is twofold. We must keep in mind that St. John makes a very definite link between the salutation "Peace be unto you" and the words, "He shewed unto them His hands and His side." The showing of the wounds in His hands and side would make clear the identity of Christ to the disciples, and the association of the greeting "Peace be unto you" would emphasise it also. Christ had promised them His Peace when He was speaking of His impending departure, and when He had declared "I will come to you" (xiv. 18). In the first place, therefore, the salutation and the showing of His hands and side proved the identity of Christ with their Master Whose last words had been spoken to them in the Upper Room. 19-31.

Proof of
the Lord's
identity.

But there was another significance. "Jesus . . . saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He shewed unto them His hands and His side." Reading the statement again we can see there is a definite connection between "Peace be unto you" and the showing of His hands and side. The obvious inference is that the "Peace" is the result of the wounded hands and side. Thus

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St. John there is here an acted parable, for our Lord in effect
xx. proclaims a Peace for His followers through His
19-31. Cross. It is the great truth of Redemption which is here again brought forward by Christ, that by His death He had "made peace through the blood of His Cross" (Col. i. 20). Very significantly does Christ thus bring home to His disciples that there was "peace with God" for all who are "justified by faith" in Him and in His work on Calvary (Rom. v. 1; cf. Acts x. 36).

The cumulative effect of our Lord's salutation and of His acted parable seems to have been that the disciples in truth now realised that it was their Master Whom they saw before them, and we are told that they were "glad, when they saw the Lord."

Our Lord, however, had a further message for them. Probably after a few moments, whilst they remained speechless in wonder and awe, Christ went on again. "Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." This salutation is the complement and natural sequence of the first. The previous one had proclaimed "Peace with God" for the disciples, by the death of Christ, but now this second salutation proclaims "Peace from God" for the disciples as they are commissioned by Christ to preach the Gospel of Redemption. The disciples, and this includes not only the ten apostles but also all who were present in the Upper Room, were commissioned and sent forth by Christ to proclaim the good news of redemption. St. Paul says in 2 Cor. v. 20, "we are ambassadors

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for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: **St. John** we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to **xx.** God." St. Paul's statement is very striking, but it **19-31.** is the logical outcome of our Lord's own words here. Christ's followers who know the meaning of having "peace with God" "through the blood of His Cross" are all definitely commissioned to proclaim that message to the world, and they are assured of "peace from God" as they do it (cf. Phil. iv. 7; Gal. i. 3, 4; Col. iii. 15).

Again there seems a slight pause in the narrative, as though the words of Christ were allowed time to sink into the minds of the disciples. Then St. John goes on once more, "And when He said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

In considering these words we must bear in mind that the first phrase of verse 22, "and when He had said this," links what follows with what has been said in verse 21: just in the same way that the similar phrase in verse 20 links the "Peace with God" with the crucified hands and side. So here the promise of "Peace from God" when they are sent forth by Christ as His ambassadors (v. 21) is accompanied by the act of "breathing" on them and the command to receive the Holy Spirit and to remit and retain sins.

Receiving
the Holy
Spirit.

The only other occasion in the Bible when this particular word for "breathed" is used is in Gen. ii. 7, when God "breathed" into the nostrils of man the

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St. John

xx.

19-31.

breath of life. So here our Lord "breathed" upon His assembled followers, and accompanied the action by telling them to "receive" or "take" the Holy Spirit, and the implication is that an opportunity was given them for "receiving" or "taking" of His Spirit. Just as Gen. ii. 7 differentiated man from the animal creation, so this action of Christ was to differentiate the "natural man" from the "man in Christ." Upon all that assembled body of Christians our Lord "breathed," giving them the opportunity by faith to receive His Spirit, and to become conscious of His own living presence with them.

It was an anticipation of Pentecost (Acts ii.) and not fully realised till Pentecost, since Christ was not yet glorified (vii. 39), but it was an anticipation for a specific purpose. It was a practical illustration in the case of the first of Christ's followers that "peace with God" by the cross, and "peace from God" for His service is accompanied by the realisation of the Spirit of Christ.

It should be noted in passing that the word translated "Receive" ye the Holy Spirit, is literally "Take" ye the Holy Spirit. All those in the Upper Room had the opportunity to believe in the Risen Christ, each one was able to have faith in His finished work of redemption, but the onus lay upon each individual to appropriate for himself by an act of faith all that their Master offered them. For apostles, as for everyone else in that Upper Room, some definite act of will was necessary to receive the blessings of Christ. As each of them

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surrendered themselves to Christ in the sense that **St. John** they fully believed in Him and in all for which He **xx.** stood, they would become one with Him, they would **19-31.** receive His Spirit.

Then as they "received" or "took" the Holy Spirit, they would be equipped for the service upon which they were being sent, for by the power of the Holy Spirit they were to preach that the forgiveness of sins was possible by the Cross of Christ. It was the realisation of the indwelling Spirit which would give them the power to preach the gospel of forgiveness.

The Acts of the Apostles records how the command was carried out. To Jew and ultimately to Gentile the gospel was preached. Men were pointed to Christ as the One Who would give them forgiveness of sins, and they were told that in and through Christ Who died on Calvary the remission of sins was possible. The Christian Church was cradled in Redemption (cf. Acts iii. 26; x. 43; xiii. 38; xvi. 30, 31, etc.).

It should be noted, moreover, that the "breathing" of the Holy Spirit, and the command to forgive and retain sins, were given to the whole of the disciples in the Upper Room, and not merely to the ten apostles. It is the whole Christian Church which is commanded to proclaim forgiveness of sins by Christ. As men accept Christ and His Redemption their sins are remitted, as they reject Christ "Whose their sins remain, "for there is none other name **soever sins ye remit."** under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12).

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xx.

19-31.

**Thomas the
absentee.**

There was a notable absentee from the Upper Room when Christ appeared to His followers, and that was Thomas. The latter is sometimes referred to as a sceptic, but this does less than justice to his character. In the earlier days no one had ever been more loyal to Christ than he, for he was quite ready to face death for Him if necessary (cf. xi. 16). It may be that the very vehemence of his belief in Christ produced the greater reaction when his Master died. We can see from what follows in verse 28 that Thomas had a clear knowledge, clearer than that of any of the other disciples, of the implications of Christ's teaching; and it may be that this very fact brought greater despair to him than to the others when the Cross came.

The rumours of the Resurrection did not rally him, and he kept to himself in his bitter disappointment. But although the experiences of all the disciples must eventually have had some influence upon him, nevertheless he declared he would not believe unless he could see in Christ's hands the point of the nails and put his hand into His side. A man of his honesty and clearness of vision, who had passed through such an agony of despairing disappointment, would have no half-measures. At all events when next the disciples came together Thomas was with them.

As on the previous occasion, the doors were closed for fear of the Jews, and once more their Master appeared in the same mysterious manner, with His salutation "Peace be unto you." Immediately afterwards He turned to Thomas and bade him use

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his finger and hand to test that it was really his Master. But the sight of Christ, and the knowledge that He had read his thoughts and knew his spoken words, was quite sufficient for Thomas. He burst out with the exclamation "My Lord and my God." The very character of the exclamation shows the spiritual insight of Thomas. Mary Magdalene, with all her love for Christ, could only call Him "Teacher" after the Resurrection (v. 16). Even Peter, who climbed to a height where none of the others attained, could think of Christ primarily only as a Messianic King (vi. 69). But in the Upper Room, Thomas, with a clearness of vision which none other had yet shown, poured forth his soul in the cry, "My Lord and my God." For the first time our Lord was addressed as God, and for the first time He was given the acknowledgment of His Deity. The heart-broken despairing Thomas found, what millions of earnest seekers have since found, that Christ is the Incarnate God.

Thus the climax of St. John's Gospel is reached in this 28th verse. At the outset of his Gospel St. John had laid down his own conviction of Who Christ was (i. 1-18). He declared that He was the Word made flesh, the Only-begotten of the Father, and One Who gave men power or capacity to become sons of God through belief in Him. The object of his writing had been to bring home to people these same facts, and he chose certain of the signs performed by Christ, with a view to persuading others of what he himself knew. So step by step from the first sign at Cana of Galilee St. John has shown

St. John

xx.

19-31.

The
spiritual
insight of
Thomas.

The climax
of this
Gospel.

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John us something of Christ and of His power. His
xx. power over nature, both at Cana (ii. 1-11) and in
19-31. walking on the sea (vi. 19): His power to heal the
sick, whether it be in boy (iv. 46-54), or man (v. 1-9),
and whether the sickness be inherited (ix.), or the
result of sin (v. 1-9): His power to give life to the
dead (xi. 44)—these are some of the signs St. John
records. Interspersed with such miraculous powers
had been other signs for those who could see them
(cf. vii. 46; xii. 12-16). Then in addition there had
been clearly shown that faith in Christ was necessary
to procure the life He offered. The nobleman on
behalf of his son (iv. 50), the impotent man at
Bethesda (v. 6), the man born blind (ix.), these tell
us something of the place of faith in procuring the
life Christ offered. Slowly the first disciples learned
the same lesson. They believed in Him after the
sign at Cana, even though their belief was a purely
personal one, and did not fully comprehend Christ's
Person (ii. 11). At Capernaum they had advanced
to believe that He had words of eternal life and was
the Messianic King (vi. 69). But in the Upper
Room from the lips of Thomas came the full con-
fession of faith in Christ as the Incarnate Son of the
living God, a confession which meant eternal life.

There is another point to note, and one that
affects us to-day. Our Lord said there was a 'blessed-
ness' for Thomas in thus making the first full
acknowledgment of His Deity, but He impliedly
promises greater blessing still for those who "have
not seen, and yet have believed." The generations
who have lived since the days of the first disciples

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have not seen the Lord in the flesh, they have not seen His pierced hands and wounded side. What they have had before them is the record of Christ in the New Testament. They can study that record, they can let the picture of Christ sink into their mind, and they can let His words grip their soul. As they acknowledge Him and yield themselves to Him, they know something of the mystical union of Christ with His followers, a union which is eternal life, and they know something of the happiness of those who have Christ as their Lord and God. It is the joyful experience of countless Christians that they have been, and are, "blessed" in believing, even though they have never seen Christ with the eye of sense. But they can, in all sincerity, echo the words of St. Peter when he later wrote of his Master as One "Whom having not seen, ye love: in Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable . . ." (1 Pet. 1, 8).

St. John

xx.

19-31.

So looking back to the Upper Room we can see the truths which we need for ourselves. First of all we can see that the Risen Christ brings us peace "through the blood of His Cross." Then we are assured that the Risen Lord gives us His peace as we obey His command to proclaim forgiveness of sins by His Cross (cf. St. Luke xxiv. 46, 47; St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). And finally there is the promised "blessedness" for those who believe; for that blessedness means life eternal and joy unspeakable for those who enter into the knowledge of the Lord.

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St. John

xx.

19-31.

MEDITATION ON GOD'S PROMISES

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10.)

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John iv. 9).

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John v. 1).

". . . God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life . . ." (1 John v. 11, 12).

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John iii. 1).

PRAYER

O God, merciful and loving heavenly Father, we Thy humble servants look up to Thee in heartfelt gratitude for all Thy Fatherly goodness towards us: We thank Thee for the love which sent Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ into the world, which led Him even to the Cross for our redemption: We thank Thee for His death and resurrection which open wide to us the gate of everlasting life: We praise Thee for the eternal life given to us by faith in Christ, for the joy of fellowship with Him now and the assurance of the hope of glory. For these and all Thy blessings we give Thee grateful thanks, beseeching Thee to give us grace that we may show forth our thanks "not only with our lips, but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to Thy service, and by walking before Thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to Whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, world without end." *Amen.*—(*Book of Common Prayer* and T. W. G.)

XVIII

THE RISEN LORD IN GALILEE

After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he *himself*.

There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore; but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt *his* fisher's coat *unto him*, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come *and* dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto

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him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry *thee* whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall* this man *do*? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.—ST. JOHN XXI. 1-25.

St. John THE climax of St. John's Gospel is reached in the
xxi. full confession of Thomas in the Deity of our Lord
1-25. (xx. 28), for in that confession lay the reason for the writing of the Gospel (xx. 30, 31). It seems strange, therefore, to find other events added in chapter xxi, and this has caused some writers to doubt whether the chapter is from the pen of the Evangelist. There is, however, no valid reason for doubt on this point, for the chapter is found in all the earliest manuscripts of this Gospel, whilst the language and style are similar to the rest of the Gospel.

The Risen Lord in Galilee

It is quite possible that the chapter is a kind of **St. John** after-thought, and something which was added **xxi.** some time after the first twenty chapters were **I-25.** written. The reasons for writing it may be two-fold. It may have been to record for the sake of the Christian Church the story of Christ's public restoration of Peter to his position in the Apostolic band after his denial of Christ. It may also have been written to disabuse people of the idea that St. John was not to die (*v.* 23), an idea which was prevalent towards the end of the first century, and which persisted for a long time afterwards.

Like the rest of the Gospel it bears its own witness to its truth. The simple straightforward narrative has nothing of artificiality about it, but is simply a transcript from life. Incidentally it gives a wholesome corrective to those who have fanciful ideas about the methods of our Lord's life and teaching after the Resurrection. Had it been given to us to write a narrative of what we suppose our Lord did and said after He rose from the dead, most of us would have given a story full of heavenly scenes, of heavenly visitants, of talks about life in the spirit world—in short, something very remote from this work-a-day world of ours. But the story here, as in the other Gospels, is of a Christ Who visits His followers in their ordinary occupations, or as they go about their ordinary duties. It is the same Christ, acting along the same lines He had done before, but now unhampered by the bodily limitations which had been there “in the days of His flesh.”

A straight-
forward
narrative

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St. John
xxi.
1-25.
Verses
1-14.

Both St. Matthew (xxviii. 10) and St. Mark (xvi. 7) tell us that the disciples were told by their Master to go to Galilee with a view to meeting Him there. They had therefore evidently gone to Capernaum, which had been our Lord's headquarters in the early days of His ministry (ii. 12), and where Peter and John and some of the others probably had their homes.

All of them no doubt had been worked up to a high state of expectation in view of our Lord's appearances, and in view also of His promises of the Holy Spirit (xiv. 26; xvi. 13, etc.), and of the coming power from on high (St. Luke xxiv. 49). They could not keep still, therefore, for the nervous tension was too much, and so to occupy themselves, and possibly also to secure money for their livelihood, they determined to go fishing.

There were only seven of the disciples together at this time. They included Thomas, who had shaken off all despondency and was now in close touch with his old colleagues, and also Peter, who was back again with his fellow-disciples. It was the impetuous Peter who as usual voiced the feelings of the rest, and it was at his suggestion that they set out at sunset for a night's fishing. Their toil was fruitless, however, and when daylight came they had caught nothing. Their boat had been drifting fairly close inshore, and when they were about one hundred yards from the bank they were hailed by a Stranger. The disciples were not aware that it was their Master, Who throughout these forty days only allowed Himself to be recognised as,

Jesus on
the shore.

The Risen Lord in Galilee

and when, He wished (cf. xx. 15; St. Luke xxiv. 31). **St. John** The Stranger addressed the toilers in the hearty **xxi.** manner usually associated with sailors, "Lads, **1-25.** have ye any meat?" and the obvious intent was that He wished to buy some of their fish. When they replied in the negative, however, He at once told them to cast their net on the right side of the ship, where they would find fish.

The inference of the disciples would probably be that the Stranger had spied a shoal of fish on the right side of their boat. There is nothing at all events to indicate that Christ by voice or gesture made His request in a compelling way. We can only infer that our Lord's statement was given in a normal way, since it excites no comment in the narrative. The disciples, however, obeyed the command, and the result was surprising, for their net was now filled with such a number of large fish that the moving of the net became a difficulty. The number of fish was one hundred and fifty-three, and the fact of the number being known to St. John is easily accounted for when we remember that the proceeds of the catch would have to be divided between the owner of the ship and the crew.

This extraordinary catch of fish had a significance "It is the for one of the disciples. To six of them it obviously **Lord."** meant simply a stroke of good fortune that they had fallen in with such a well-informed Stranger, but to St. John, "that disciple whom Jesus loved," it meant something far more. He evidently remembered the former occasion when they had toiled all the night and taken nothing, and how

The Gospel according to St. John

St. John Christ had then told them to cast in their net again, **xxi.** with the result that they had secured a great catch of fish. The similarity of the experiences obviously occurred to him, and with the intuition which seems natural to him, he burst out to his friend Peter, "It is the Lord."

1-25.

If John was the disciple of deep and loving intuition, Peter, as always, was the man of action. He had only a loin-cloth on while he was working, but as soon as he heard John's exclamation he slipped on an outer garment and immediately plunging into the sea made his way to the shore to meet his Master. The other six disciples hurried into the small boat attached to their fishing smack, and soon they also were ashore, having dragged the net full of fishes through the water.

When they had arrived, they saw that their Master had in some mysterious way prepared a fire of charcoal on which some fish was cooking, and also some bread. As they came up from the boat He invited them to bring some of the fish they had caught, and add it to what was being cooked. Peter therefore went on board and brought from the attached net what was necessary. As soon as everything was ready Christ invited them to eat with Him. There seems, however, to have been a certain amount of restraint on the part of the disciples. They all recognised Him even though in some way His appearance was not what it had been when He came to them in the Upper Room. It was thus a quiet wondering band who ate their meal with Christ on the shore that morning.

The Risen Lord in Galilee

The appearance of our Lord and the miraculous catch of fish were important enough in themselves for St. John to chronicle, but they are also only a prelude to what now took place on the sea-shore. For as soon as the meal was ended a very striking conversation took place between Christ and Peter. We know from 1 Cor. xv. 5, and from St. Luke xxiv. 34, that soon after His Resurrection our Lord had appeared privately to Peter. In this interview the apostle no doubt had poured forth his repentance for the base denial of his Master, and had received the forgiveness which Christ ever promises to the repentant sinner. But it was still necessary to rehabilitate Peter in the eyes of his fellow-disciples.

It is quite possible that Peter himself felt somewhat uncomfortable in spite of Christ's forgiveness. The fire of charcoal, which was in front of him as he ate, might have recalled that other fire before which he had denied his Master (xviii. 18, 25). At all events there was a general feeling of restraint both on the part of Peter and of his fellow-disciples as they sat by the fire. The silence, however, was broken by our Lord, Who turned to Peter with the words, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" The form of the question had a double reproof in it. The title "Simon, son of Jonas" would take the disciple back to his first meeting with Christ (i. 42), when the latter had predicted that he would be of rock-like character. But now the disciple is not addressed as Peter, the man of rock-like character, and the absence of the title "Peter" must have sounded very strange,

St. John
xxi.

1-25.

Verses

15-17.

Christ and
Peter.

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St. John
xxi.
1-25.

and in some way very formal to him. So also the rest of the question had a tinge of reproach in it. It would take the disciple back to the Upper Room where he had so confidently declared, "I will lay down my life for Thy sake" (xiii. 37), and to the occasion when he had boasted, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended" (St. Matt. xxvi. 33).

"Thou
knowest
that I love
Thee."

It was a meek-spirited disciple, therefore, who replied, "Yea, Lord: Thou knowest that I love Thee," and the meekness of the reply is brought out even more clearly in the particular use of the word translated "love." In our Lord's question the Greek word for "love" implies personal affection. In the answer of Peter, however, there is a different Greek word which indicates a friendly feeling, and which certainly implies a lesser kind of love or affection than that of which Christ speaks. In his humility, therefore, Peter will not claim the highest form of devotion which his Master's words implied. But in his humility he is reassured by the fact that our Lord accepts his reply, and that He gives him the task of feeding the "lambs," who need the help which he can give who knows the meaning of weakness.

Christ then becomes more direct. He avoids any reference to the other disciples and asks Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" but He still uses the term for "love" which He had used before. Again in his reply Peter refused to use the word for "love" which Christ used, but he affirms emphatically his devotion to Christ on the lower

The Risen Lord in Galilee

level. Our Lord in answer says, "Then be a **St. John** shepherd to My sheep" (Moffatt's translation), or, **xxi.** as some old versions would put it, "Then be a **I-25** shepherd to My little sheep" (cf. 1 Pet. v. 2). It seemed as though our Lord would suggest a more tender and more guardian-like attitude for Peter with regard to the younger and growing followers of Christ.

But again Christ turns to the disciple, and now using Peter's own word for "love" He says, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" It is not surprising that the question, repeated in this significant way, should pierce Peter to the quick. It seemed in effect that Christ was throwing doubt even upon the devotion which Peter was offering Him. Therefore he burst out, "Thou knowest all things." He says that Christ by His omniscience was aware of everything, even of Peter's feelings, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." Our Lord simply replied, "Feed My sheep." He wanted him to care for all the Christians committed to his care, the older as well as the younger.

The whole interview was full of significance both for Peter as well as for the rest of the disciples. In one sense it served to establish Peter in his former position publicly, but it also had a much wider bearing than this, for it emphasised the terms on which all future action of the apostles should be based. The reiteration of the question "Lovest thou Me?" showed that the basis of all apostleship is love for Christ, and thus it was meant to call Peter and his fellow-disciples to a higher sense of the

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St. John work and office entrusted to them. His own failure,
xxi. his knowledge of Christ's forgiveness, the realisation
1-25. of his own weakness—these things were to put him in a better position to help those who were trying to serve Christ. Hence there is probably an echo of our Lord's words in St. Peter's references both to the position of the ordinary Christian (1 Pet. ii. 25) and to the attitude of the elders to those over whom they were placed (1 Pet. v. 1-3). The lesson evidently sank deep into his mind.

Verses As soon as our Lord had finished His exhortation
18-19(a). to Peter concerning his future conduct, He went on to predict what lay in store for the disciple. Up to the present time, Christ says, Peter had done what he liked and had acted according to his own wishes, but later on, however, in the service of his Master he will have a different experience. Our Lord's words in verse 18 may mean that He had in view the change of character which was necessary for Peter if he was to be a true disciple and apostle. If this is the interpretation, then we know from such an incident as Acts xii. 6 that Peter did learn his lesson, for in that particular experience there was an exhibition of unwavering trust which betokened a far more stable Peter than before.

But our Lord's words may also mean, as St. John himself inferred (v. 19), that Peter was to crown his life by the supreme devotion of being crucified for fidelity to his Master. In the Neronian persecution, thirty years later, Peter did lay down his life for Christ, and tradition declares that he was crucified

The Risen Lord in Galilee

head downwards at his own request. By his martyrdom he "glorified God" (cf. xii. 23), just as in his changed life from Pentecost onward he "glorified" the Master Who had pardoned and restored him, and had called him to follow Him with the spirit of love. St. John
xxi.
1-25.

As soon as our Lord had finished the prediction of what lay in store for Peter, He told the latter to follow Him apart from the disciples, for some purpose not stated. As they moved away together, possibly towards the mountain in Galilee where Christ was to meet the disciples (St. Matt. xxviii. 16), John, with that feeling which kept him ever near to Christ, began to follow them. Peter noticed this, and as they drew away from the other disciples he said to his Master, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" Our Lord's prediction of the future was obviously very much in Peter's mind, and hence it is not surprising that he should want to know what was in store also for John. Verses
19(b)-23.

It may have been sympathy born of close friendship, or it may only have been mere curiosity, which prompted him to inquire the future of the disciple who had been in such close intimacy with Christ. He may have wanted to know whether martyrdom was also in store for John, and there may have been something querulous in the exclamation, "and what is going to happen to this man?" It is possible that the tone of voice may have suggested that probably an easier time was in store for "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and that no doubt

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St. John there were not to be hardships for him as for
xxi. Peter.

1-25.

Whatever the purport of the query, however, the reply of Christ was in the nature of a rebuke. It was no concern of Peter how long John might live, or what his future was to be; that was a matter which lay in the hands of the Master.

That St. John had no pathway of roses, the records amply prove. He suffered with Peter in the early days of persecution (Acts iv. 3, 13-21), and towards the end of his life he was exiled to Patmos on account of his preaching the word of God and for his witness to Christ (Rev. i. 9). He may not have had the tumultuous career which Peter's aggressive personality brought him, but his faithful witness, in spite of his loving temperament, brought him his full share of suffering.

Our Lord's reply to Peter, however, had the effect of causing the spread of a rumour that John should not die. St. John's advanced age may have done something later on to give credence to the rumour, but the report was widespread, and persisted in one form or another even as late as the seventeenth century. St. John therefore carefully records his Master's statement, *i.e.* "If I will that he tarry till I come. . . ."

Commentators from earliest times have given various explanations to these words. Some have thought that Christ was pointing to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, which is often regarded as a judicial coming of Christ to the Jews. It is certain that St. John lived beyond this event. The more

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obvious interpretation of the "coming of Christ" St. John is, however, His final coming to judge the world, **xxi.** which is the general meaning given to it by the **i-25.** apostles. This, of course, is not yet, and naturally St. John has not lived to see it. The emphasis of our Lord's statement, however, is on the word "If" I will that he tarry till I come. . . ." He was merely putting forth a supposition. If it was His will that St. John should live till His return, then it was not Peter's concern, it was not for him to interfere with the plan of the Master for another. But the mere statement of supposition had caused the rumour which this record of St. John is aimed to contradict.

Here the record ends. The last two verses were **Verses** evidently added by elders of the Ephesian Church **24-25.** to emphasise their belief in the authenticity of what is here written. The last half of verse 25 is, of course, an Eastern form of exaggeration which merely suggests abundance. The gospel writers certainly never make any claim to write a "life" of Christ. St. John says plainly that he has made a choice from the many things he knew (**xx. 30**), whilst we can also see from such references as **Matt. iv. 23, 24; ix. 35; xv. 29, 30**, to say nothing of others, that there is much of our Lord's preaching and of His acts of which the details have not come down to us. All that we have in the Gospels would not fill more than about a month of His active ministry, so that there is much of His life and work of which we have no actual record.

But there is enough to give us all that is necessary

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St. John
xxi.
1-25.

for our salvation. There is preserved to us the fourfold picture of the Eternal Son of God Who came to live the life of man : there is the fourfold record of Christ Who died that we might live. Whatever may have been left unrecorded, we know that in the mercy and providence of God the record preserved to us has been "written that (we) might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing (we) might have life through His name."

The same
Christ.

Thus the lessons of this concluding chapter are simple and important. It reminds us first of all that the Christ of the Resurrection is the same as the Christ Who walked the roads of Galilee. His loving concern for the disciples toiling in vain on the sea is only typical of His attitude of thoughtful care for them during His earthly ministry. The conditions of His life and of His Being may change, but not His love nor care. Moreover, that love and care was shown to His disciples as they went about their ordinary duties, and when they were engaged in the pursuits which the business of life compels men to do. This is surely very significant. The tendency of men is to expect the realisation of Christ's Presence primarily in buildings set apart for worship. Without in any way belittling such a tendency, the post-Resurrection appearances of our Lord tell us that He can be found and will be found as men go about their ordinary everyday life.

Then it reminds men, and especially those who

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are set apart for the Christian ministry, that the **St. John** prime requisite for Christian service is love for **xxi.** Christ. The Christian minister has to be both **I-25.** "called" and "equipped." His equipment, intellectually and otherwise, may be all that is desirable, but he is only truly "called" if that call comes through love for Christ as his Lord and Saviour. It is the loving response to the Master Who gave all for men, which alone guarantees that a man has the true spirit and the real power to work for Christ.

And lastly there is the value of the record of Christ's life. The last two or three generations have seen much criticism levelled against certain parts of the Old and New Testament as new knowledge of the past and new knowledge of the laws of nature have been discovered. Yet with it all the value of the Bible remains. For the value of the Bible ultimately is that it gives us the revelation of the living God; and the value of the Gospel of St. John in particular is that it gives us a true record of the life and teaching of Christ. Those who accept that teaching know from personal and practical experience that the teaching is true, and those who, by the power of the Holy Spirit, try to follow in the steps of Christ, know in their own souls that He is indeed the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Well may each of us, therefore, humbly pray the prayer with which we close.

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St. John

xxi.

I-25.

PRAYER

Blessed Lord, Who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of Thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*—(*Book of Common Prayer.*)

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